

THE “NUTS AND BOLTS” OF BEING A COUNCIL

Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. (OFS Rule, article 19)

Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. (OFS Rule, article 14)

The vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion. For this purpose, the members of the Secular Franciscan Order gather in ecclesial communities which are called fraternities. (G. C. art. 3.3)

Therefore, if at the heart of the Franciscan call is Christ, then around that heart is fraternity.

Why the emphasis on Fraternity to Franciscans?

- God is love, and love is always more than self. Thus the Father as God is not alone; Christ as God is not alone; the Holy Spirit as God is not alone.
- God is a Fraternity of a Trinity. The basic mystery of the Trinity reveals a unity in community that shows what fraternity should look like.
- Further, Christ as man is not alone. He had a Holy Family: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. He called to himself, not just one to follow Him, but Twelve, a fraternity of apostles.
- Christ will command: “Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:12-13 NAB).
- The Call that Francis receives is a Call with his Fraternity of Friars to follow the Way of the Gospel.
- Francis calls all of us Seculars, not to individually follow him, but together, as ‘Brothers and Sisters of Penance’.
- Fraternity is more than the local gathering. Fraternity is with all the human family. For all of us (men and women) are brothers and sisters of the same Father.
- Indeed, St. Francis calls us to be brothers and sisters to all of God’s Creation; with Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Wine and Sister Water, Brother Fire and Sister Earth, even with Sister Death (The Canticle of the Creatures).

Fraternity is thus a call to build a community of love in harmony with all of God’s children and all of God’s creation to reflect Love back to the God of Love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[FUN Manual, “Fraternity and Francis”, pages 4 and 5 of 22]

THE TRUE MEANING OF COMMUNITY

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

COMMUNITY IS A GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LEARNED HOW TO COMMUNICATE HONESTLY WITH EACH OTHER. WHOSE RELATIONSHIPS GO DEEPER THAN THEIR MASKS OF COMPOSURE. WHO HAVE DEVELOPED SOME SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT TO REJOICE TOGETHER, TO MOURN TOGETHER, TO DELIGHT IN EACH OTHER, AND TO MAKE THE CONDITIONS OF OTHERS THEIR OWN. COMMUNITY IS SOMETHING MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS - ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

A COMMUNITY MUST BE INCLUSIVE

- All must have the willingness and the commitment to coexist
- All must transcend individual differences
- All must appreciate differences and celebrate differences as gifts
- All together must make decisions through consensus

A COMMUNITY IS REALISTIC

- If individuals are free to speak their minds and buck the trend
- If it incorporates the dark and the light, the sacred and the profane, the sorrow and the joy, the glory and the mud
- If it's conclusions are fully developed

A COMMUNITY IS CONTEMPLATIVE

- If it is humble and realistic
- If it is a safe place where old wounds are healed, old resentments are forgiven, and old resistances are overcome
- If hope replaces fear
- If it is a safe place where our natural yearning and thrust toward health, wholeness, and holiness is realized
- If it is a safe place where healing and conversion happen because others have stopped trying to heal and convert them

A COMMUNITY CAN AGREE TO DISAGREE

- And no one takes sides
- And conflicts resolve without physical or emotional bloodshed

A COMMUNITY IS A GENUINE COMMUNITY

- If it embraces total decentralization of authority as an essential characteristic
- If all are servant leaders
- If there is a flow of leadership

THE SPIRIT OF A GENUINE COMMUNITY IS THE SPIRIT OF PEACE

“RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES”

R = take **RESPONSIBILITY** for what you say and feel without blaming others
“I” Statements: “I feel, I don’t understand, I believe, I am disappointed . . .”

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, 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. Whomever 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 do not want to say anything, simply say, "pass" and proceed to invite another to share. Invite until all have had the opportunity to share.

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

Of utmost importance is the requirement that fraternity members contact a council member and request to be excused anytime they are unable to attend the fraternity gathering. This is not an optional extra. Even I, as Regional Minister, request to be excused when my responsibilities prevent my attending my local fraternity. This is of great help to the fraternity council in making decisions regarding the status of an individual member. A separate yearly attendance roster maintained by the secretary is critical for the Council to quickly access the status of any member in regard to attendance (see example on page 15).

- ◆ 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

Since participation in fraternity life is essential for belonging to the SFO, the council has the duty to dialogue with members who fail to meet this requirement. During this dialogue the members should be encouraged to return to fraternity life. If, however, this is not possible, members should be asked to submit a letter to the council requesting temporary withdrawal (or, in some cases, definitive withdrawal). Should the members fail to send these letters, the council may suspend the members and inform them that they are being temporarily withdrawn from the fraternity. In either case, the members are considered lapsed and removed from the local fraternity's membership roll. **NOW THE CRITICAL PART**

Since these members still belong to the Secular Franciscan Order, a change needs to take place in the NAFRA database so that the local fraternity (and the Region) are not

assessed a fair share for these lapsed members. This is accomplished by showing the members as INACTIVE (either as temporary withdrawal or definitive withdrawal).

◆ Decide on the establishment of sections or groups in conformity with the Constitutions and the statutes (i.e. cells)

◆ 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 (a budget should be prepared each year and emphasis on contributions to the common fund on a regular basis as per article 25 of the Rule)

◆ 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 (follow procedures outlined in “BSSF – process to appoint spiritual assistants” document)

◆ 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, and decide on a schedule for making fair share payments

Minister

◆ Make sure that the directions and the decisions of the council are put into practice (remember, you were elected to serve the council and to lead and animate the fraternity)

◆ 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 and the local fraternity

◆ Insure that the *Communio Newsletter*, *JPIC Animators’ Notes*, and Regional Formation Director’s communications, is distributed to all active (including excused) members of the fraternity

◆ 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

◆ Prepare the annual report to be sent to the Regional Executive Council 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 Executive Council by December 31st (for the BSSF Region, this includes a current fraternity roster to be submitted with the annual report)
- ◆ Make sure updates to the directory are returned in a timely manner
- ◆ 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 and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new minister

The Minister should order a copy of the “Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership” and periodically review some of the contents with the Council members. This is an excellent tool. The Minister should also have a copy of the “Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order”. Both of these handbooks are available from Smoky Valley Printing.

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 (use of an electronic program, such as “Quicken” is encouraged – contact Regional Treasurer for more info – backup all information)
- ◆ Record in the same register the items of expense, specifying the date and the purpose, in conformity with the directions of the fraternity council (Include any receipts when and where possible).

- ◆ Submit a financial report and the bank account register for approval at regular intervals as decided upon by the council
- ◆ Submit the annual financial report to the Local Fraternity Council, to both the Minister and Secretary, at the end of the year (this is treasurer's report form #3 found on the NAFRA website)
- ◆ 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 (ensure privacy of information)
- ◆ Send the assessed fair share to the Regional Treasurer in total preferably by February 28th of each year, after amount is decided upon at the Annual Regional Council meeting, or make payments on the quarterly schedule, due 2/28, 5/30, 8/30, and 11/30)
- ◆ Keep a copy of and update if necessary, the fraternity's Tax ID (each fraternity should have a separate EIN – Employers Identification Number, IRS form SS-4)
- ◆ Update and maintain the Treasurer's Binder and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new treasurer (include backup cd or flash drive of electronic data)

Secretary

- ◆ Compile the official minutes of the fraternity and of the council 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
(the ledger/register should be maintained in chronological order and reviewed by the council periodically to ensure that information listed is up-to-date)
- ◆ Maintain and update fraternity register (roster) with names, addresses, phone numbers and emails of all members
- ◆ 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 and council meetings
- ◆ Assist the minister in sending announcements of upcoming meetings or activities
- ◆ Assist the council with general communication (maintain a file on minister/council correspondence with members and higher councils)
- ◆ Update and maintain the Secretary's Binder and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new secretary

Formation Director

Co-ordinate, with the help of the other council members, the formative activities of the fraternity.

The formation director and team are responsible for Initial formation (Four Pillars), but the program must still be approved by the council before it is implemented. The following are the BSSF Formation Guidelines and Resources that have been approved by our BSSF-REC to be used in our local fraternity's formation program:

1. *BSSF Regional FORMATORS' Guidelines for Orientation and Initial and Ongoing Formation*, June 30, 2010
2. *For Up to Now, Foundational Topics for Initial Formation Manual*
3. *Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the U. S.*
4. *Elements of Formation: A Reflection on the Formation Process*
5. *BSSF Formation Manual, 2008 (need to confirm year)*

Ongoing Formation is the domain of the council (Four Pillars).

Work with the spiritual assistant, whose principle task is to communicate Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and ongoing formation (GC art. 90), in leading and training the fraternity's formation team.

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.

Along with the spiritual assistant, make recommendations to the council prior to profession, concerning the readiness and suitability of the candidate to make a lifetime commitment to live according to the Rule;

Maintain a *fraternity's initial formation record keeping binder* for each individual in initial formation, which should also include one copy of each of the BSSF Formation Materials listed above.

Maintain other Formation Director's Binders and, upon leaving the office, pass ALL formation binders, manuals, and materials on to the newly elected Formation Director. We encourage you and the new formation director to make time to meet to help with him/her with the transition and become familiar with the use of binder's, manuals, and materials and answer any questions.

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 to 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

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.”

An agenda should be prepared and given to the members in advance of both these events. Generally prepared by the Minister.

General Elements of a Fraternity Gathering

The following order is also from the National Minister, Deacon Tom Bello's article on the General elements of a Fraternity Gathering found in TAU-USA.

First is 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.

Second is 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. Ongoing formation should be a minimum of one hour at each gathering.

Third is Social Time

Social time is a very important part of each fraternity gathering. During this informal time the brothers and sisters are joyfully present to each other and make time to get to know 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.

Fourth is Necessary 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.

The fraternity council should also prepare an annual calendar of events including all planned fraternity gatherings.

Example:	<u>Month</u>	<u>Fraternity gathering</u>	<u>Other activities</u>
	October “	Oct. 12 – 1 p.m.	Transitus, Oct. 3, 8:00 p.m. Blessing of the Animals, Oct. 4, noon
	November	Nov. 9 – 1 p.m.	Annual Retreat, Nov. 16, 9 a.m.

Etc., etc., etc.

Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order

This is a prime responsibility of the fraternity Council. All council members should make the effort to attend initial formation sessions.

Copied from “Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order and Elements of Formation: A Reflection on the Formation Process”

Formation in and for the Secular Franciscan way of life is understood as the realistic fostering of the growth of the individual Secular Franciscan and fraternities so that the way we live in today's world may conform more and more to the example of the Holy Gospel.

Although there are stages of formation to be traversed, it is a single process of growth, assimilation and integration of values and experiences; it is likewise an on-going conversion, so that, enlivened by the Spirit, we may conform to the image of the Son of God.

Orientation: (BSSF region recommends 6 months) The purpose of the Orientation Phase is to determine some basic dispositions of prospective members that are essential to building fraternity and entering into mature, committed relationships. Is the person free from any other commitments or impediments that would hamper him/her from faithfully living our OFS Rule; such as poor health, emotional or psychological problems, life issues (such as work, family...) or ministries...? Please refer to the *Guidelines for Initial Formation in the SFO in the U.S. Manual*, p. 25.

Stages of Initial Formation

1. the Inquiry Phase, (BSSF region recommends 6-12 months) begins with the “Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming” and is a period of seeking and choosing.

The Inquirer seeks to understand what a vocation is and if he or she is called to the OFS. We highly recommend the assignment of Sponsors for each inquirer and the use of the “Ceremony of Sponsorship”

2. the Candidacy Phase, (BSSF region recommends minimum of 24 months) begins with the “Rite of Admission” and is a period of interiorization and integration of our Rule.

The candidate must be open to the Spirit, and to the Word of God; become more aware of the importance of prayer and of spiritual direction to hear, to seek, to understand the action of the Spirit in the Church and in Fraternity.

The period of initial formation aims at setting the individual on the way to attaining full maturity in the three dimensions: **the human, the Christian and the Franciscan**.

It is in each human person who, *in the fullness of their humanity*, becomes a Christian: it is this Christian who wishes to live *Christian Humanism* in the spirit of Saint Francis by embracing the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

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 ongoing 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 relationship with God, our Church, and our 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 relation 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.

During initial formation, the individual follows a curriculum, outlined in our *BSSF Regional Formators’ Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation* and the *For Up to Now, Foundational Topics for Initial Formation* resource manual, which introduces him/her to our Rule, General Constitutions, history, tradition, theology and spirituality. They follow a personal daily program of prayer and study and meet monthly with his/her class for group study, dialogue and prayerful reflection. 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 sharing and dialogue.

The Candidate is the chief agent in this entire process. They themselves are responsible for cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit; and his/her own responsibility for evangelical discernment of vocation, analyze motives, capabilities, character, interpret and evaluate one’s experience; integrate Franciscan values into one’s thinking; cultivate human qualities in a balanced personality with harmony and integrity.

Finally, it is the Holy Spirit, who is the primary agent of formation; who calls and communicates the fundamental vocation to holiness; teaches, strengthens, enriches, consoles, counsels, assists, and sustains and makes us sharers of the Resurrection.

In addition:

- The fraternity should be "...a visible sign of the Church, the community of love." It "...should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan Vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members" (OFS Rule article 23).
- The Minister w/council animates and guides the fraternity; the minister is primarily responsible for overseeing the formation program, for supporting the Formation Director and being aware of the quality of the program, fostering growth in both the fraternity and its candidates.
- The Formation Director must be qualified and prepared; capable of interpreting the charism in light of the times and the new demands of church & society; respectful of each person; capable of discernment and fraternal correction; in constant communication with the Spiritual Assistant and others who share responsibility.
- The Spiritual Assistant serves as a concrete sign of communion and the co-responsibility which exists between the First Order & Third Order Regular and their relationships with the OFS. In fraternity the Assistant serves as a brother/sister, teacher and guide to assure the integrity of faith and charism.

Ongoing Formation:

On-Going Formation begins with the Rite of Permanent Profession and is a life long journey for maturing and consolidating our gospel way of life, in the manner of St. Francis.

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-long 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 Christ, in the manner of St. Francis. This journey requires a continuous process of support in the movement towards full maturity in Christ and a commitment to the Gospel way of life, in the manner of St. Francis. It needs continuous personal and fraternal nurture of a critical consciousness—the Franciscan vision. It demands regular and constant self-evaluation] -- a continuous rediscovery of the poor and crucified Christ in the daily experiences of one's life through prayerful reflection, dialogue and presence in fraternity.

Every fraternity gathering is to incorporate a minimum of one hour of ongoing formation. The local fraternity council is to coordinate the choice of topics and encourage all professed members to share in the monthly presentations. A team approach to giving the presentations utilizing a professed member along with those in initial formation can also be very effective.

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 from the 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 permanently excused by discussing the reasons with the Council. An Excused Form or a letter stating pertinent reasons for such a request must be submitted to the local 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 form or request for a letter 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 they must continue to remain faithful in their commitment to the fraternity and to the Franciscan way of 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 a prayerful and open dialogue between the member and council and further discernment by the council, 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.
7. Any decisions made by the Council should be recorded in the remarks section of the fraternity register/ledger and status updated in the NAFRA database.

Suggested Records

We also recommend that the local fraternity maintain a list of all members with key dates associated with that member. For example:

KEY DATES (name of fraternity – date established)

Name of member – birthday – date professed – Anniversary
2013 – 2014 – 2015 – 2016

Brother Juniper Jan. 2 Oct. 24, 2004 9 - 10 - 11 - 12

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The following is an example of the yearly attendance to be maintained for each member of the local fraternity. Generally, this responsibility lies with the Secretary. The fraternity Council should review this attendance each time they meet.

Calendar year 2012

<u>Name</u>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alice	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bruce	A	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X
Chris	X	A	X	E	E	A	A	A	A	(withdrawn)		
Donna	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X
Frank	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A
Jerry	X	X	X	E	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X
Linda M.	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X
Linda R.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Patrick	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rose	X	X	X	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tom B.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	E	X	X	X
Tom S.	E	E	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Walter	(permanently excused by council: 3-15-11)											

X = in attendance

E= excused by council

A= absent

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)

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/from, the Region it is located in, and the date of transfer. (refer to articles 9.19 and 9.20 of the BSSF Regional Guidelines for additional information on how to handle transfers)

Deaths: Please notify the Regional Minister of the date of death of a member. Also, please ensure the status is entered into the NAFRA Database.

EXCUSED MEMBERS

The elderly and the sick are those who 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.

The Sporadically hindered members are 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.

The Permanently hindered members are the 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 OFS 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.

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.

OFS 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. (General Constitutions - Article 34 -above) (USA National Statutes – Article 18.5.a, .b)*

We (CNSA – Council of National Spiritual Assistants) 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.

UNITED STATES WEBSITES AND ACRONYMS

REC

Regional Executive Council

BSSF

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
www.bssfsfo.org

NAFRA

National Fraternity of the United States of America
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

COMMUNIO

Regional newsletter sent to all fraternity members

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.

CONCLUSION

Excerpts from the FUN Manual

The Franciscan Family

Franciscans:

- Are optimistic and joyful
- See the beauty, goodness and love of God everywhere
- Understand the whole of creation is filled with a loving God,
- Realize God speaks to them through their senses
- Love the Gospels, they have a special appeal for our spirituality
- Are more about being (evangelical/gospel people) than just doing (apostolic mission people). These two aspects need balance.
- Understand Jesus' Incarnation is visible, audible, tangible presence of God upon earth; the center around which our spirituality revolves
- See Jesus as our brother and the beloved Son of God
- Not concerned with past or future, live for the day [in the present moment]

[FUN Manual, The Franciscan Family, p. 3 of 12]

An Overview of the Franciscan Family

- Three Orders
 1. First Order, the friars: OFM, OFM Cap., and OFM Conv.
Spiritual emphasis: minority
 2. Second Order, the Poor Clares
Spiritual emphasis: poverty
 3. Third Order
 - a. The Seculars, OFS
Spiritual emphasis: penance>conversion
 - 1) Our symbols, the TAU and the San Damiano Cross
 - b. The Regulars, friars and sisters TOR
Spiritual emphasis: works of mercy and on-going conversion

[FUN Manual, The Franciscan Family, p. 4 of 12]

- All three Orders of the Franciscan Family were founded by St. Francis of Assisi. All three Orders are a cell in the Catholic Church.

Secular Franciscans live in the world: We are called to live spiritual poverty, not physical poverty.

Article #16 of our OFS Rule reminds us to *esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.*

Art. #11 of our SFO Rule reminds us that we are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Working in the secular world gives us the opportunity not only to serve our brothers, but to bear witness to a genuine spirit of the gospel and to transforming the world with the spirit of the beatitudes.

Art. #12 of our SFO Rule - [we are] *witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation we have embraced...*

Our task is simple: make the wisdom of the gospels and its values come alive, and become a source of transformation for ourselves and for all we touch.

Unique to our Region is *The Four Pillars* document. *The Four Pillars* not only captures the message of our OFS Rule, but gives us a visual to understand the importance of each Pillar. Our initial formation program gives those in Initial Formation the opportunity to study and implement all four pillars into his [her] daily life. At Profession, he [she] consecrates his [her] life to the kingdom of God, in the manner of St. Francis. The 'manner' is our Rule. We are called to faithfully live our Rule every day of our life, for the rest of our life. Our personal presence at fraternity meetings and gatherings are part of being 'faithful'. Granted there are unforeseen circumstances that may keep us from attending meetings and gatherings. During this time the Professed are asked to seek guidance and options from the council.

There is a difference between the OFS Rule that we study and the *law of grace*. The former is a theory/concept that is written on paper. Through our faithfulness in living our Rule, it is imprinted *on our hearts through the infusion of grace by the Holy Spirit.*

We seek to become living words wherein others can 'read the gospel of Christ, in the manner of St. Francis'. [Italicized words are from a sermon by St. Joseph of Leonissa, OFM Cap.]

PEACE AND ALL GOOD!

-END-