

2022 Annual Report from the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity to Its Member Orders: *Order of Secular Franciscans, Third Order Society of St. Francis, Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, Order of Lutheran Franciscans*

June 10, 2022

Brothers, sisters, and siblings in Francis and Clare,

On behalf of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, we send our love and greetings in Christ's name. It would be fair to say that the Joint Committee has had a challenging year.

We held a Mini Conference in September 2021 via Zoom, focusing on the "Elements of Franciscan Unity", five characteristics of the Franciscan life that hold our orders together. These elements – Baptism, Vocation, the Franciscan Charism, Christ-Centeredness, and Prophetic Voice – provided ample fodder for robust discussion, and those who attended were encouraged by our time together.

In November, members of the Joint Committee participated in an interfaith gathering created and led by Roots and Branches called "The People of God: A Sacred Prism". This program was led by longtime Joint Committee member Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF, in partnership with Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat and Rabbi Shefa Gold. Participants from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions gathered to explore prayer and the desire for peace that is at the heart of our faith and practice. It was a beautiful experience of community, vulnerability, and hope.

Our May Mini-Conference, scheduled for May 20-21, was canceled due to low registration numbers. This led to a discussion at our annual meeting about ways to make the Committee's work more accessible and meaningful for the members of our order. In response, we have decided to shift our work this coming year from the previous semi-annual model of mini-conferences to a series of brief sessions exploring the elements of Franciscan unity in preparation for an extended retreat in November 2023. These sessions will be held via Zoom on September 10, 2022; January 21, 2023; April 22, 2023; and July 22, 2023, from 4-6pm Eastern Time. Each will focus on a single element of Franciscan Unity, with special emphasis on how each element is part of our practice as followers of Christ in the way of Francis and Clare. Information about each retreat will be shared widely within each Order, and participation is encouraged and welcomed!

We are excited about the prospects for more regular engagement with our Member Orders over the next calendar year and we thank you for your continued support of encouragement and funding for our mission to strengthen the relationship and witness of spiritual unity among Franciscan communities.

Our membership at present consists of representatives of the Order of Secular Franciscans, Third Order Society of St. Francis, Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and Order of Lutheran Franciscans. It includes:

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Wishing you peace and everything good,
Br. Andrew Chavanak, n/OLF, and Br. Mark Molter, n/OLF, Co-Conveners