

Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity 2020 Report

A Report to the Minister and Chapter of the Order of Secular Franciscans (OFS), the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of St. Francis (TSSF), the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF), the Order of Lutheran Franciscans (OLF), and the Order of Franciscans of Reconciliation (OFR).

July 15, 2020

Since its inception in February of 2004, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity has believed:

“For the sake of creation, we are called to bear witness to the essential unity of the church, the Body of Christ, by working towards Franciscan unity in all of its expressions. We will achieve this through dialogue and collaboration among the Orders which follow Christ in the tradition of Francis and Clare.”

www.franciscanunity.org

Per Chris Markert, the Minister General for the Order of Lutheran Franciscans has graciously agreed to continue covering costs and maintain the website for another three years. A link to our Facebook presence is also found on the website.

The Joint Committee is proud to have join our ranks Debbie Kendall & Ron Youngerman representing the Order of Lutheran Franciscans (OLF). They have agreed to serve a term of at least three years. Their enthusiasm for the Committee work is evident. They will surely make great additions to our unifying efforts within the Franciscan world.

The Joint Committee was notified on February 13th, 2020 by Fred Ball, the Minister General of the Order of Franciscans of Reconciliation (OFR), that they are to rescind their involvement with the Joint Committee for now. It was expressed that as much as they love the vision (as Fred Ball was one of the founding members), it's simply not a viable option for their Order which is still fewer than 10 professed and noviced members. We extend to OFR our prayers for the health of their members and continued growth in numbers.

On February 25th, 2020, the Committee was notified by Jahiro LeFevre, OEF that he will be stepping down as an OEF representative for the time being. He has been part of the Joint Committee for about four years and now felt the need to shift his attention around to other things. The OEF council has been notified of this decision, and upon much prayer and discernment, have invited Ron Nuss-Warren to represent OEF on the Committee for at least three years. Ron Nuss-Warren has been professed with OEF since 1988 and will serve as a wonderful addition to the Joint Committee's ongoing work. Ron will officially begin after Jahiro has stepped down during the annual committee meeting in August at which time the leadership will be turned over to OFS for a three year term.

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Until this past year, the Joint Committee produced conferences throughout the United States, designed around The Elements of Franciscan Unity, bringing together the leadership of now the five sponsoring Orders to reflect on and discuss those Franciscan principles we hold in common regardless of our ecclesial identification. Those conferences have been enthusiastically received and have served to further our mission to broaden our understanding of each other and to deepen our relationship.

At its Annual Meeting last August 2019, following much prayer, discussion, and listening to each other, the Joint Committee discerned that the 2020 conference again should be based on the Franciscan Elements we hold in common between our respective Orders.

The conference was to be held from Friday afternoon, May 21 through Saturday afternoon, May 22 at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, AZ. The theme of the conference was “Together for the Sake of Creation: How can we bear witness as Christian Franciscans in the fabric of our world?” Due to the COVID 19 pandemic the Committee collectively decided to cancel the 2020 conference and the Franciscan Renewal Center was notified requesting a refund.

2020 Annual Meeting of the Joint Committee was slated for August 20-22, 2020 at the Pallotine Renewal Center 15270 Old Halls Ferry Rd Florissant, MO 63034 to begin the plans for the upcoming year. Once again due to COVID 19 health concerns the Joint Committee has agreed to meet by Zoom for up to three sessions consisting of two hours each, in order to begin planning for the upcoming year.

And last, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the respective Chapters for their on-going financial support of this valuable and mutual ministry, and continuing to encourage members of their Order to attend the Elements of Franciscan Unity conferences when it occurs in their area.

Current members of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity are:

Beverly Hosea, TSSF
Masud Ibn Syedullah TSSF
Debra Snider-Scott, OEF
Jahiro LeFevre, OEF
Donna Hollis, OFS
Michael Carsten, OFS
Debbie Kendall, OLF
Ron Youngerman, OLF

Respectfully submitted, July 15, 2020

Br. Jahiro LeFevre, OEF, Convener

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Addendum to the Report:

As of this moment the Joint Committee does not believe it will be possible to host in person conferences in 2021 Due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. With this in mind, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity will host two “Elements of Franciscan Unity” Conferences in 2021 via Video Conference.

The committee is also exploring the possibility of hosting one video conference in 2021 dedicated to interfaith experience. Following the **Roots and Branches** program “The People of God a Sacred Prism”

The Elements of Franciscan Unity Conference Dates are:

- January 14, 15 & 16 - Elements of Franciscan Unity Conference
- May 13, 14 & 15 – Elements of Franciscan Unity Conference
- The possible Interfaith Conference Date is yet to be determined.

The Joint Committee also holds one business meeting every year. This meeting is for review of the past year’s efforts, planning of the next years efforts and the creation of the Annual Report to our respective orders.

The 2021 annual business meeting of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity will be held via video conference June 10, 11 & 12, 2021

Respectfully Submitted September 3, 2020

Michael Carsten OFS, Chair