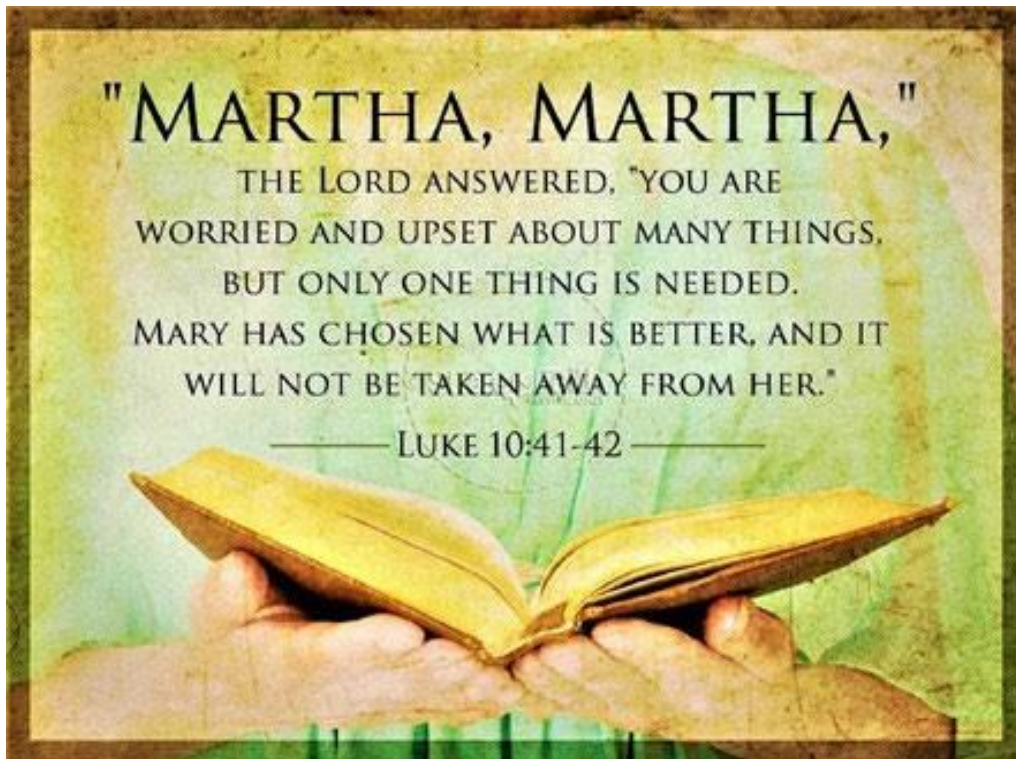


Regional Council Manual

2024



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**Manual
for
REGIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS**

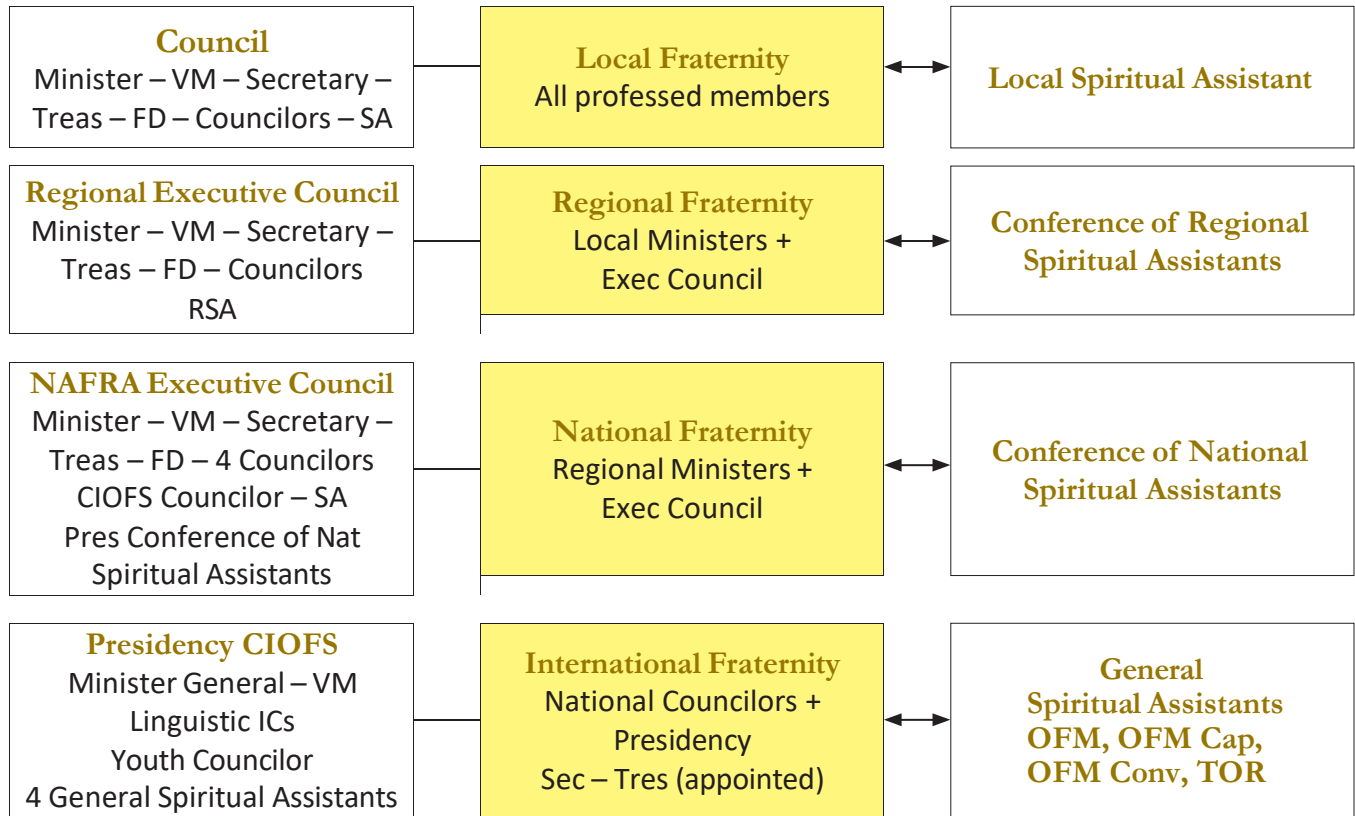
Table of Contents

- Structure of the Secular Franciscan order1
- What Is the Regional Fraternity?.....2
- What Is a Fraternity Council?.....2
- What is the Regional Council?.....2
- What Makes Up a Council?3
 - Respectful Communication Guidelines4
 - Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership4
 - A Healthy Council Makes a Healthy Fraternity.....4
- Regional Minister’s Responsibilities (Art. 51 of the GC)5
- Regional Vice Minister’s Responsibilities (Art. 52.1 of the GC).....7
- Regional Secretary’s Responsibilities (Art. 52.2 of the GC).....8
 - Record Keeping9
- Regional Treasurer’s Responsibilities (Art. 52.4 of the GC).....10
 - Fair Share (Art. 30.3) (Rule 25) (Art. 18.7 NAFRA Statutes).....12
 - Financial Assistance Fund Form.....13
 - Audit Questionnaire for Fraternity Financial Records14
 - Steps for Reviewing Treasurer Records.....16
- Regional Formation Director’s Responsibilities (Art. 52.3 of the GC).....19
 - For Up to Now (FUN Formation Manual).....20
 - Creation of confidential file folder for each prospective member20
 - Faith Inventory.....20
 - Orientation20
 - Sacramental Documents Required20
- Regional Area Councilors21
- Fraternal Visitation.....22
 - Preparation22
 - The Visit.....22
 - Evaluation.....22
 - The Report22
- Guidelines for the Fraternal Visitation of a Local Fraternity23
 - (Art. 92.1-3, Art. 92.1-5 of the GC)23
 - (Art. 94.1-5 of the GC)24
- Request for Fraternal Visitation (Art. 51 of the GC; Art. 14, SSPA).....25
- When Should the Local Fraternity Council Invite Regional Assistants?.....26
 - It Needs Periodic Check-Ups.....26
 - When to Call the Doctor.....26
- Sample Letter – When a Fraternity Fails to Request Visitation.28
- Fraternal Visitation Preparation Information (Art. 94, Rule 22)29
 - Preparation29
 - Visit30
 - Report30
- Pre-Visitation Questionnaire Completed by the Fraternity Council31
- Sample Letter to the Local Minister who has not sent back the Pre-Visitation Forms.....35
- Fraternity Council Self-Evaluation for Each Council Member.....36

- Fraternity Minister’s Checklist in Preparation for Visitation40
- The Fraternity Gathering.....42
- Affiliate Orientation Plan (Art. 53 .5, 103 of the GC) (Art. 18 .13 NAFRA Statutes).....43
 - Process43
 - Orientation43
 - Ongoing.....44
- Visitor’s Questionnaire Sheet for Visitation45
- Visitation Stipend (Art. 18 .8 of the GC).....46
- Sample Cover Letter to Local Minister – Draft of Visitation Report47
- Regional Visitation Report.....48
- Pastoral Visit54
- Checklist for Pastoral Visitation55
- Elections (Art. 31, 49, 76, 77,78, 79, 80 of the GC, Rule 21)56
 - The Fraternity Council56
 - Election to and Termination of Offices.....56
 - Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO (Art. 12 .3 of the GC).....58
- Request for Fraternity Election Form59
- Offices in the Fraternity to be placed in Fraternity Newsletter.....60
- Election Requirements62
- Fraternity Election Procedures Before Elections – Nominations Committee63
- Fraternity Chapter of Elections – Nominations Slate64
- Suggested Election Procedures65
 - Before the Election65
 - Election Process Begins67
- Ballot and Vote Count Form69
- Report of Election71
- The Apostles’ Creed72
- After the Election73
- Transition Phase After Elections74
 - Responsibility74
 - Activities.....74
 - Support of Past Council Mrrmbers.....74
- Stipend for Elections (Art. 18.8 of the GC)74
- Changes in Elected Offices (Art. 31.1-4 of the GC).....75
- Vacant Offices (Art. 81.1-3 of the GC).....75
- Incompatible Offices (Art. 82 of the GC).....75
- Resignation from Offices (Art. 83.1-2 of the GC)76
- Removal from Office (Art. 84.1-6 of the GC).....76
- Appeal Process (Art. 59 of the GC)76
- Letter of Introduction as the New Area Councilor77
- Survey for a Fraternity in Distress78
- Spiritual Assistants (Art. 90.18-29 of the GC)79
- Suggested Links for Resources.80
- Acknowledgements.....81

- General Constitutions 2000 GC-1
- Statutes of the National Fraternity NS-1
- The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order Rule-1

Structure of the Secular Franciscan Order



For Up to Now (FUN) Manual 4-23-11

What Is the Regional Fraternity?

General Constitutions, Article 61

1. The regional fraternity is the organic union of all the local fraternities existing in a territory or which can be integrated into a natural unity, either by geographic proximity, or by common problems and pastoral circumstances. It assures the link between the local fraternities and the national fraternity in respect to the unity of the OFS and in accord with the cooperative efforts of the Franciscan religious orders to provide spiritual assistance within the area .
3. The regional fraternity: — is animated and guided by council and a minister; — is ruled by the national statutes and by its own statutes; — has its own seat.

What Is a Fraternity Council?

General Constitutions, Article 31

1. **Rule 21** On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister who are elected by the professed according to the constitutions .

Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community.

Within themselves the fraternities are structured in different ways according to the norm of the constitutions, according to the various needs of their members and their regions, and under the guidance of their respective council .

General Constitutions, Article 49

1. The council of the local fraternity is composed of the following offices: minister, vice-minister, secretary, treasurer, and master of formation. Other offices may be added according to the needs of each fraternity. The spiritual assistant of the fraternity forms part of the council by right. (See Article. 90.2)

What Is the Regional Council?

General Constitutions, Article 62

1. The regional council is constituted according to the provisions of the national statutes and of its own regional statutes . At the heart of the regional council there can be set up an executive council (or board) whose duties are determined by those same statutes.
2. The regional council has the following duties:
 - a. to prepare the celebration of the elective chapter; to promote, animate, and co-ordinate the life and activities of the OFS and its insertion into the local Church within the regional area;
 - b. to detail the action plan of the OFS within the region according to the directives of the national council and in collaboration with it and to publicize that program to the local fraternities;
 - c. to communicate the directives of the national council and of the local Church to the local fraternities;
 - d. to communicate the directives of the national council and of the local Church to the local fraternities;
 - e. to provide for the formation of those responsible for animation;
 - f. to offer to local fraternities activities which support their formative and operative needs;

- g. to discuss and approve the annual report to the national council;
- h. to schedule, when circumstances recommend, the fraternal visit to the local fraternities, even if it is not requested;
to make decisions regarding the use of available funds and, in general, to deliberate on matters regarding the financial management and the economic affairs of the regional fraternity; to have, before its term of office is finished, the regional fraternity's financial and real estate situation audited either by an expert who is not a member of the council or by the fraternity's board of examiners;
- i. to perform such other duties as are indicated by the Constitutions or necessary to achieve its own aims.

What Makes Up a Council?

This document should be given to each new elected council. Many new regional councilor members have little idea what is required of a local fraternity council. You may want to also send to all the fraternities in your area.

Article 32 General Constitutions

1. The ministers and councilors should live and foster the spirit and reality of communion among the brothers and sisters, among the various fraternities, and between them and the Franciscan family. They should, above all, cherish peace and reconciliation in and around the fraternity.

Basic Definition:

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

A council is a group that:

- Has a sense of commitment; the willingness to coexist is crucial.
- Has learned to transcend its individual differences .
- Appreciates differences, which are celebrated as gifts.
- Arrives at decisions through consensus .

A council is realistic:

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

A council is contemplative:

- A council is humble and realistic because it is contemplative.

A council is a safe place:

- The result of a safe council is that old wounds are healed, old resentments forgiven, old resistances overcome — fear is replaced by hope.
- Human beings have within them a natural yearning and thrust toward health and wholeness and holiness .

- A group of humans becomes healing and converting only after its members have learned to stop trying to heal and convert.

A council is a group that can fight gracefully:

- On the council there are no sides .
- Conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed.

A Council is a group of all leaders:

- An essential characteristic of a council is a total decentralization of authority .
- There is a flow of leadership .

A Council is spirit .

- The spirit of true peace:
Fraternity Council Meetings are a time to come together to deal with the business of facilitating the activities of the local fraternity .

Respectful Communication Guidelines

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

E = use **EMPATHETIC** listening

S = be **SENSITIVE** to differences in communication styles

P = **PONDER** what you hear and feel before you speak

E = **EXAMINE** your own assumptions and perceptions

C = keep **CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership

Every Council Member should read *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership* thoughtfully and often. It contains a good deal of useful information. As a suggestion, give everyone on the council a copy and assign a few pages each month. Discuss what impressed each council member the most and be sure everyone has an opportunity to speak . You can order the *Handbook* from Smoky Valley Printing found in *TAU-USA* magazine.

A Healthy Council Makes a Healthy Fraternity

It is admirable to watch the constructive efforts of local councils to fulfill their calling in support of the whole fraternity. On the other hand, it is sometimes also observed that the weakness of a council leads to mediocrity or serious malaise in their fraternity – and they wonder why.

Regional Minister

Article 51 General Constitutions

1. While firmly upholding the co-responsibility of the council to animate and guide the fraternity, the minister, as the primary person responsible for the fraternity, is expected to make sure that the directions and the decisions of the council are put into practice and will keep the council informed about what he or she is doing.
2. The minister also has the following duties:
 - a. to call, preside at, and direct the meetings of the regional council; to convoke, every three years, the elective chapter of the fraternity, having heard the council on the formalities of the convocation;
 - b. to prepare an annual report to be sent to the national council after it has been approved by the council of the fraternity;
 - c. represent the [council] in all its relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities . When the [council] acquires a juridical personality in the civil order, the minister becomes, when possible, its legal representative;
 - d. to request, with the consent of the council, the pastoral and [national] visits, at least once every three years;
 - e. to put into effect those acts which the Constitutions refer to his or her competence;

The regional minister also has the following additional responsibilities:

- to read, study and implement the Rule, Constitutions, and Statutes;
- to set setting goals, resolving issues, and accomplishing tasks for the good of the region;
- to set parameters on how the council meetings will be conducted;
- to inform the council members of their reporting responsibilities;
- to oversee that all regional council members are fulfilling their assigned duties;
- when needed, to delegate responsibilities to appropriate regional council member(s);
- along with the council, to set goals for the next three years;
- to make sure that the directions and the decisions of the regional council are put into practice;
- to keep the regional council informed concerning activities and information at the national level and inform (if needed) the local fraternities;
- to keep the regional council informed about local fraternity activities;
- to encourage area councilors to request local fraternity ministers to attend or send a local council representative to regional meetings and other regional activities;
- to ensure that communication is maintained between the region and the local fraternity;
- to ensure that TAU-USA National Newsletter and Up-to-Now Regional Newsletter are sent to local fraternities by the region's secretary or others assigned to do so;

- to make sure periodic updates are made to the region's directory of local councils;
- to convene a yearly Chapter of Ministers meeting;
- to offer a yearly regional retreat to local fraternities;
- to perform such other duties as are required by the SFO Constitutions and Statutes
- to carry out the proper purposes of the council;
- to update and maintain the Regional Minister's Binder;
- upon leaving this position, to pass the Regional Minister's Binder to the newly elected regional minister;
- to make arrangements to hand over all regional documents to the newly elected regional minister;
- as outgoing regional minister, to make him or herself available to help the incoming regional minister become acquainted with urgent and pending matters
- to hold regional council meetings at least four times a year. (If the regional minister is unable to be present at a council meeting, the meeting may be held with the regional vice minister conducting the business [see [Article 52.1\(c\) General Constitutions](#)].)

Regional Vice Minister

Article 52 General Constitutions

1. The regional vice-minister has the following duties:
 - a. collaborate in a fraternal spirit and support the regional minister in carrying out his or her specific duties;
 - b. exercise the functions entrusted by the council and/or by the assembly or chapter;
 - c. take the place of the regional minister in both duties and responsibilities in case of absence or temporary impediment. (*Also, see [Article 81 GC](#)*)
 - d. assume the functions of the regional minister when the office remains vacant.

Additional Duties:

- read, study, and implement the Rule, Constitutions, and Statutes;
- perform such other duties as are required by the SFO Constitutions and Statutes;
- assist the regional minister upon request;
- exercise all functions assigned by the regional council;
- update and maintain the Regional Vice Minister's Binder;
- upon leaving this position, pass the Regional Vice Minister's Binder to the newly elected regional vice minister
- make arrangements to hand over all regional documents to the new regional vice minister
- the outgoing regional vice minister should make himself/herself available to help the incoming regional vice minister become acquainted with and brought up-to-date on pending matters.

Regional Secretary

Article 52.2 General Constitutions

2. The secretary has the following duties:

- a. compile the official acts of the regional fraternity and of the council and assure that they are sent to their respective proper recipients;
- c. 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.

The secretary also has the following responsibilities:

- if elected, holds voting privileges and is accountable for all decisions made by the fraternity council; if appointed, does not have voting rights on the council
- compile the official minutes of regional council meetings. The council minutes are extremely important and must be maintained; they contain valuable and sometimes personal information. Every decision the regional council makes should be documented

This is especially true:

1. In the event one of the council members resigns, the council must vote on his or her replacement. This must be documented in the minutes as above. A council member who has been appointed in this manner does not have voting rights.
2. Many discussions and decisions made by the council are confidential and should be kept confidential. Be discreet in speech and keep this part of the meeting separate from the council meeting minutes.

Additional Guidelines

- keeps attendance records at regional council meetings
- assists the regional council with general communications
- assists in sending announcements of upcoming events, meetings, or other regional activities
- forwards to the Regional Database Manager, Mary Lou Coffman, marylousfo@gmail.com documents such as newly received, newly professed, deaths, withdrawals, and transfers, etc., received from the local fraternity
- to ensure that *TAU-USA* National Newsletter and *Up to Now* Regional Newsletter are sent to local fraternities through the region's secretary or others assigned to do so
- updates and maintains the Regional Secretary's Binder
- upon leaving this position, passes the Regional Secretary's Binder to the newly elected regional secretary
- makes arrangements to hand over all regional documents to the new regional secretary
- is available to help the newly elected regional secretary become acquainted with his or her new position on the regional council



RECORD KEEPING

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

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

It is also considered essential to keep files for:

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

(Fraternal visitors will check this register)

HARDBACK BINDERS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR:

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



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Regional Treasurer

Article 52.4 General Constitutions

4. The treasurer, or bursar, has the following duties:

- a. to guard diligently the contributions received, recording each receipt in the appropriate register, with the date on which it was given, the name of the contributor, or the one from whom it was collected;
- b. to record in the same register the items of expense, specifying the date and the purpose, in conformity with the directions of the regional council;
- c. to render an account of his or her administration to the regional council according to the norms of the national statutes.

The treasurer also has the following additional responsibilities:

- if elected, holds voting privileges and is accountable for all decisions made by the fraternity council
- if appointed, has no voting rights (see *NAFRA Statutes*)
- presents an annual budget for conducting the business of the regional council
- all payments are to be made by check, recorded in an accurate ledger
- expenditure of funds must be approved by the council in advance
- ensures the deposit of all funds into such bank accounts in the name of the region and keeps an accurate ledger
- maintains a yearly calendar showing monthly payouts and future activity events for which the regional council will need to provide funding . This calendar will help the newly elected regional treasurer after regional council elections have taken place
- presents an up-dated financial report at each regional council meeting showing current expenses, income, and checkbook balance
- appropriate forms for reporting the financial health of the regional council can be found at: <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/guidelines-forms-other-resources/>
- submits a financial report and the bank account register for approval at regular intervals as decided upon by the regional council
- provides the regional council a year-end report showing receipts, expenditures and balances in the treasury for the year
- receives from local fraternity treasurers their Fair Share assessment from the fraternity's Common Fund
- is available to answer questions when a local fraternity is planning to have an audit of their treasurer records
- sends the assessed fair share to the National Treasurer once a year
- receives by the end of the year a current report of candidates and professed from each local fraternity treasurer
- at a national visitation provides a stipend to both the pastoral visitor and national visitor, if approved by the regional council

- keeps a copy of, and updates if necessary, the region's Tax ID
- updates and maintains the Regional Treasurer's Binder
- upon leaving this position, passes the binder to the newly elected regional treasurer
- makes arrangements with the newly elected treasurer and new regional minister to meet at the bank holding the region's checking account to sign signature cards. At this time the past treasurer will hand over all documents pertaining to this position
- takes the following to the bank:
 - a. IRS Determination Letter
 - b. An up-to-date letter from National stating – "St. Margaret of Cortona Region is a 501 (c) (3) Organization"
 - c. EIN Number
 - d. Articles of Incorporation
 - e. Latest Elections jReport (Original)

FAIR SHARE

Candidates, Professed and Excused Members

Each year the fraternity treasurer makes the fraternity's "Fair Share" payment to the regional treasurer. The amount for each candidate and professed member varies in the different regions in the United States. The Fair Share is paid from the monthly Common Fund received at each gathering. If a candidate or professed member is unable to attend the gathering for more than a month, that person is asked to mail his/her Common Fund contribution to the local fraternity treasurer.

Article 30 General Constitutions

2. **Rule 25** In a family spirit, each brother and sister should make a contribution to the fraternity fund, according to each one's means, to provide the financial means needed for the life of the fraternity and for its religious, apostolic, and charitable works. The brothers and sisters ought to provide the means necessary for supporting the activities and the operations of the fraternities at higher levels, both by their financial assistance and by their contributions in other areas as well.

Article 18 NAFRA Statutes

7. The Local Fraternity is responsible for contributing to the Regional Fraternity on a fair share basis from its common fund to underwrite the costs of that fraternity [cf. General Constitutions, Article 30 .3]. A fair share contribution is made based on the number of active and excused brothers and sisters, but not for those who are deemed lapsed.
 - a. 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.

**St. Margaret of Cortona Regional Fraternity
OFS Financial Assistance Fund Request
Form
For Regional Events**

The Regional Executive Council created Financial Assistance Fund to aid active professed members to attend any Regional planned events (i.e., Day of Reflection, Annual Chapter Retreat, Chapter of Mats, Formation Directors Weekend, Chapter of Ministers, and other regional events). Financial Assistance Fund will cover part or all of registration fee and will not cover travel / transportation.

Steps are as follow:

- Local fraternity's active professed member requesting assistance will first discuss with their minister.
- Local fraternity's minister will fill out this form, sign and forward to the regional minister.
- The regional minister and/or Regional Executive Council will review.
- If approved, the regional minister will inform both regional treasurer and local minister.
- If disapproved, the regional minister will inform local minister.

Name of Professed Member: _____

Name of Local Fraternity: _____

Year first professed: _____

Active Professed: Yes No

Name of regional event for which Financial Assistance Fund requested:

What circumstances caused this professed member to ask for financial assistance (brief statement only) _____

Amount of Financial Assistance Fund requesting (Note: the amount should not exceed the cost of registration.) _____

Total Cost \$ _____

Contribution Amount: Participant \$ _____

Local Fraternity \$ _____

Amount requested from the Region \$ _____

Requested by: _____

Name of Local Fraternity's Minister / Signature / Date

Below for Regional Minister use only

Approved Disapproved Amount if approved: \$ _____

Regional Minister Name / Signature / Date

St. Margaret of Cortona Region
Audit Questionnaire for Fraternity Financial Records
Fraternity Treasurer: _____
Fraternity Name/Location: _____
Date of Audit: _____

1. ARE RECORDS KEPT ELECTRONICALLY? Note: If no, skip to #2 Yes No

- a. What application/software is used? _____
- b. How frequently are backups done? _____
- c. Where are backups stored? _____
- d. Do you have online access to bank accounts? Yes No
If so, who else is allowed access? _____
- e. Is the bank reconciliation process automated within the application/software?
 Yes No

2. ARE RECORDS FOR THREE YEARS PRESENT?

- a. Treasurer's report (form available on NAFRA website)? Yes No
- b. Check register Yes No
- c. Invoice for each bill paid or expense report from members submitting for reimbursement.
 Yes No

If so, what is the approval process? _____

- d. Bank Statement for each bank account (see Treasurer's report for number of accounts to expect). Yes No
- e. Bank Reconciliations Yes No
- f. Letter from the Federal government assigning the region a Federal Identification Number
 Yes No

If records are not present, what reason is given? _____

3. REVIEW THE CHECK BOOK REGISTER:

- a. Do all payees appear to be related to Local/Regional business? Yes No
- b. Is a monthly reconciled balance noted in the register? Yes No
- c. Are all check numbers accounted for? Yes No

4. BANK STATEMENTS:

Select two monthly bank statements for each bank account in each year reviewed. (e.g., for three years for one account there will be six different bank statements reviewed.)

- a. For EACH monthly bank statements selected, has the bank statement been reconciled?
 Yes No

If not, explain reason given. _____

- b. For EACH bank statement selected, does the reconciled balance from the bank statement agree to the reconciled balance in the check register. Yes No

If not, explain reason given. _____

- c. For EACH bank statement selected, trace deposits listed to deposit slip. Do these amounts agree? Yes No

If not, explain reason given. _____

d. For EACH bank statement selected, trace the checks that cleared the bank to the source documents. Is there an invoice, expense report, or some document that explains why the check was written? Yes No

If not, explain reason given. _____

e. Is the invoice marked paid with the date and check number? Yes No

If not, explain reason given. _____

5. CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED:

a. Do deposits document source of the receipt? Yes No

b. Is there a register or some document that lists the amount each fraternity has given monthly?
 Yes No

6. REPORTS:

a. Are annual financial reports made to the Regional Treasurer? Yes No

b. Are regular financial reports made available to the Council and fraternity members?
 Yes No

If so, how? _____

c. Is a budget prepared on an annual basis? Yes No

If so, how is it reviewed and approved? _____

7. NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS:

a. Does the fraternity have any non-financial assets (real estate, bond/stock certificates, etc)?
 Yes No

If so, how and where are records of those assets kept? _____

8. LOCATION OF RECORDS:

a. Checkbook, register and blank checks _____

b. Records of contributions and disbursements _____

c. Record of receipts for reimbursements _____

d. Monthly and annual reports _____

e. Account Reconciliations _____

f. Account numbers and passwords _____

Printed Name and Signature of members reviewing records

Name	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Steps for Reviewing Fraternity Financial Records

Fraternity Name/Location: _____

Fraternity Treasurer: _____

Date of Audit: _____

Person Performing Audit: _____

1. Fraternity Bank Accounts:

Please list the institution(s), account number(s), account name(s), authorized signature(s) and their position on the Council

Institution Name: _____

Account Number: _____

Account Name: _____

Authorized Signature(s): _____

Institution Name: _____

Account Number: _____

Account Name: _____

Authorized Signature(s): _____

2. How and where are the fraternity's financial records kept?

3. If electronic records are kept, how frequently are backups done, and where are they stored?

4. If electronic records are kept, what software is used (including version)?

5. Is there a record of each receipt, including the date and name of the contributor?

Yes No

6. Is there a record of each expense/disbursement, including date and purpose?

Yes No

7. Who counts and deposits Common Fund and other contributions? _____

8. Are contributions deposited in a timely manner? Yes No

9. How are checks endorsed? _____

10. Who receives/opens fraternity mail? _____

11. Are bank accounts reconciled monthly? Yes No

12. Does the fraternity have a petty cash account? Yes No

13. If there is a petty cash account, what are the petty cash procedures? _____

14. What are the approval procedures for expenditures? _____

15. Are regular financial reports made available to the Council and fraternity members?

? Yes No If so, how? _____

16. Are annual financial reports made to the Regional Council? ? Yes No

17. Are treasurer's records kept for at least six years? Yes No

18. Does the fraternity have treasurer's procedures specific to the accounts and responsibilities and needs of the fraternity? Yes No

19. Does the fraternity have any non-financial assets (real estate, bond/stock certificates, etc.)? Yes No. If so, how and where are records of those assets kept?

20. Location of Records: _____

Check book, register and blank checks _____

Records of contributions and disbursements _____

Record of receipts for reimbursements _____

Monthly and annual reports _____

Account reconciliations _____

Account numbers and passwords _____

21. If members are reimbursed for expenses, what is the procedure? Are adequate receipts and approvals maintained? _____

22. Is online access available to bank accounts? Yes No

If so, who is allowed access? _____

Regional Formation Director

Article 52 General Constitutions

3. The master of formation has the following duties:
 - a. to co-ordinate, with the help of the other members of the council, the formative activities of the fraternity;

The regional formation director also has the following additional responsibilities:

- if elected, holds voting privileges and is accountable for all decisions made by the regional fraternity council
- if appointed, does not have voting rights on the council
- coordinates, with the help of the other regional council members, the formation program for local fraternity formation directors
- when needed calls the local formation directors for meetings and workshops
- works with regional spiritual assistants and the formation team in developing formation programs for local fraternities
- ensures that local fraternity formation directors obtain documentation such as Baptism Certificate, annotated with other sacrament dates are received from the inquirers. Inquirers need two letters of recommendations, one being from the inquirer's pastor; all are to be received before the "Rite of Admission." If married, provide verification of validity, Decree of Nullity, if applicable, if ordained, provide copy of letter verifying faculties. (See The FUN Manual – For the Formator 3-23-2011 – Page 18 of 26)
- sees that all local fraternity formation directors have The FUN Manual. This is a great resource for both initial and ongoing formation; make sure the members of the regional formation team become familiar with its contents. Ongoing formation materials such as Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership can be purchased at Smoky Valley Printing found in the TAU–USA national newsletter.
- ensures that local fraternity spiritual assistants are involved in the formation process in both initial and ongoing formation instruction
- updates and maintains the Regional Formation Director's Binder
- upon leaving this position, passes to the newly elected the Formation Director's Binder and *The FUN Manual*
- makes arrangement to hand over all regional documents to the new regional formation director
- is available to help the new formation director become acquainted with his or her new position on the regional council

For Up to Now (FUN Formation Manual)

Creation of Confidential File Folder for Each Prospective Member:

- “NOTE: It is recommended that all information forms, sacrament records, interview observations, correspondence, letters of recommendations and other notes be kept in a confidential file folder for each prospective member. This will help the Fraternity Council in their discernment process.” *For the Formator* – page 15 of 26

Faith Inventory:

- “A faith inventory or assessment is made. The prospective member must be a fully initiated Catholic, having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation and in good standing in the Church.” *For the Formator* – page 15 of 26

Orientation:

- Following an initial interview and faith inventory a prospective member begins Orientation.” (The St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity waits until a visitor has made three consecutive visits.)
- Orientation is a time for determining a person’s interest, eligibility, and disposition to enter the initial formation process.
- The time spent in Orientation should be sufficient to adequately cover the foundational topics outlined in *For Up to Now* (Formation Manual) and not less than three months. *For the Formator*, page 15 of 26

Sacramental Documents Required:

- Baptism Certificate (Annotated with other sacrament dates)
- First Communion Certificate
- Confirmation Certificate
- Marriage Certificate (Decree of Nullity, if Applicable)
- If ordained provide copy of letter verifying faculties
- Two Letters of recommendation, one being from the Inquirer’s pastor. (Please provide the names and addresses of your pastor or spiritual director and another person to serve as character reference). *For the Formator*, page 18 of 26

Regional Area Councilors

The area councilors have the following responsibilities:

- if elected by the local fraternity ministers or delegates at the time of the regional elections, hold voting privileges
- the regional council may appoint councilors as deemed necessary, with no voting rights
- the area councilor is accountable for all decisions made by the regional fraternity council
- follow through on jobs assigned
- within a reasonable time frame, area councilors are to prepare a spreadsheet of upcoming fraternal visitations and elections and forward to the regional minister. At the end of each year, regional area councilors will create a spreadsheet for the new year and forward to the regional minister
- at the request of local fraternities, regional area councilors conduct regional visitations
- if a fraternal visitation is due and regional council has not received a request from the local fraternity, the area councilor will contact the fraternity minister
- if the local fraternity minister has not attempted to contact a regional spiritual assistant to conduct a regional pastoral visitation, the area councilor will take on this responsibility
- at the time of the fraternal visitation, the area councilor must see a copy of the fraternity's canonical establishment and a copy of the latest audit report
- if a local fraternity appears to be in trouble, the area councilor will conduct an emergency regional visitation with a request to a regional spiritual assistant to conduct a regional pastoral visitation
- the local fraternity minister will call a chapter of elections for their fraternity every three years. The outgoing minister cannot be elected to the vice minister's position after leaving the minister's position
- if elections are due and the council has not received a request from the local fraternity, the area councilor will contact the fraternity minister
- if the local fraternity minister has not attempted to contact a regional spiritual assistant to witness the elections or a delegate has not been assigned, the area councilor will take on this responsibility
- regional area councilors are responsible for sending the *Council Members Handbook* to newly elected fraternity council members
- collaborates with the regional council in determining areas of needs at the local fraternity level
- accurate and organized records should be maintained of all communication regarding assigned duties in their area jurisdictions
- notations or short summaries of important conversations or actions should be kept in a file for future reference
- regional area councilor, once a year, should call a meeting with the local fraternity ministers in their jurisdiction. Calling a yearly meeting could save some headaches later down the road
- maintain a Regional Councilor's Binder
- upon leaving this position, pass the Regional Councilor's Binder to the newly elected regional area councilor for the assigned area jurisdiction
- make arrangements to hand over all regional documents to the new area councilor
- be available to help the new area councilor become acquainted with his or her new area jurisdiction

FRATERNAL VISITATION

While details of visitations may vary between regions, it is important that both fraternal and pastoral visitors attempt to accomplish the purpose assigned to their visit. It is in this spirit that the guidelines, that follow, are offered. A region can adopt them with the confidence that visits using the guidelines will offer balanced service to fraternities. Prayerful consideration and implementation of its phases can gain the full value of fraternal and pastoral visits .

Preparation: Well before a visit the minister together with the council should thoughtfully and prayerfully conduct a fraternal self-evaluation. We include a pre-visitation questionnaire for this purpose. The completed questionnaire should be sent to the visitors at least two weeks before the actual visitation so the visitors can make the best preparation.

The Visit: The fraternity must allow enough time for the visitors to go over the appropriate material. Time needs to be given to the meeting of the fraternity council with the two visitors and to the meeting of the assembled local ministers with the visitors.

During the Visitation: Before and after the gathering of the fraternity, time should be allowed for the visitors to meet with the council as a group and with the minister. The regional visitors will be present at the gathering to observe and evaluate. Time should be allowed for the visitors to address the fraternity .

Evaluation: The visitors will look at the following services and methods:

- Spiritual growth, prayer, and liturgy
- How needs are communicated and met
- Communication with the fraternity
- Description of both initial and ongoing formation programs including text used
- Vocation promotion methods

Proper recording and accounting for the fraternity's common fund. The regional visitor will review the following:

- a. Canonical documentation
- b. Letter from Provincial the fraternity is bonded to
- c. Minister's binder
- d. The fraternity register
- e. The secretary's minutes for the last three years
- f. The treasurer's bank statements and ledger
- g. The formation director's binder of notes, inquirer and candidate attendance records and use of the *FUN Manual*

The Report: After the visitation the fraternity will receive a written report from the visitor. Implementation of recommendations is a sign of true growth and cooperation.

What happens before and after the visits themselves are in many ways as important as the visit. The council needs to review the report and try to carry out the recommendations given.



Guidelines for the Fraternal Visitation of a Local Fraternity

Title VI The Fraternal Visitation

Article 92 General Constitutions

1. **Rule 26** The purpose of both the pastoral and fraternal visits is to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of the unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church.
2. With the consent of the appropriate council, the request for the fraternal visit as well as for the pastoral visit is made:
 - a. by the minister of the local and regional fraternity, at least every three years, to the council of the immediately higher level and to the respective conference of spiritual assistants;
 - b. by the national minister, at least every six years, to the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO and to the conference of general assistants;
 - c. by the general minister, at least every six years, to the Conference of General Ministers.
3. For urgent and serious reasons or in case of failure on the part of the minister or the council to request it, the fraternal and pastoral visit may be carried out upon the initiative of the respectively competent council or conference of spiritual assistants.

Article 93 General Constitutions

1. In the visits to the local fraternity and to the councils at the various levels, the visitor will verify the evangelical and apostolic vitality, the observance of the Rule and Constitutions, and the insertion of the fraternities into the Order and into the Church .
2. In the visits to the local fraternities and to the councils at the various levels, the visitor will in time communicate the object and the program of the visit to the interested council. He or she will examine the registers and the records, including those relative to the preceding visits, to the election of the council and to the administration of goods.

The visitor will draw up a report of the visit carried out, appending it to the records in the appropriate register of the fraternity visited, and will inform the council of the level which has held the visit .
3. In the visit to the local fraternity, the visitor will meet with the entire fraternity and with the groups and sections into which it is divided . He or she will give special attention to the brothers and sisters in formation and to those brothers and sisters who may request a personal meeting. Where required, he or she will proceed to the fraternal correction of the shortcomings eventually encountered .
4. If it is useful for the service of the fraternity, the two visitors, secular and religious, may make the visit at the same time, agreeing beforehand on the program, in a way most consonant with the mission of each of them.
5. The fraternal and pastoral visits, carried out by the immediately higher level, do not deprive the visited fraternity of the right to appeal to the council or to the conference of spiritual assistants of a higher level .

Article 94 General Constitutions

1. The fraternal visit is a moment of communion, an expression of the service and concrete interest of the secular leaders at the various levels, so that the fraternity may grow and be faithful to its vocation .
2. Among the various initiatives to achieve the purpose of the visit, the visitor will give special attention:
 - to the validity of the formation, both initial and permanent;
 - to the relations entertained with other fraternities at the different levels, with Franciscan youth, and with the entire Franciscan family;
 - to the observance of the directives and of the guidelines of the International Council of the SFO and of the other councils;
 - to the presence in the local Church.
3. The visitor will check the report of the previous audit or verification of the financial and property management of the Council, the register of the accounts and every document pertaining to the property of the fraternity and, if applicable, the condition of the juridical personality in the civil order, including the fiscal aspect. In absence of the required audit of the financial and property management of the council, the visitor can commission such an audit, to be paid by the visited fraternity, to an expert who is not a member of the council concerned. Wherever he or she deems it opportune, the visitor will obtain the assistance of a competent person in these aspects .
4. The visitor will check the records of the election of the council. He or she will evaluate the quality of the service offered to the fraternity by the minister and by the other leaders and will study with them the solution to problems which may arise. If, for whatever reason, he or she should find that their service does not meet the needs of the fraternity, the visitor will promote appropriate initiatives, taking into account also the provisions concerning resignation and removal from office, given special circumstances.
5. The visitor may not carry out the visit of his or her own local fraternity, nor of the council of another level of which he or she is a member.

Rita Colleran, OFS, gave permission to use this letter.

Request for Fraternal Visitation

Article 51 General Constitutions

2. The minister also has the following duties:
 - a. to request, with the consent of the council, the pastoral and fraternal visits, at least once every three years .

NOTE: The fraternity minister should contact the regional area councilor to request a fraternal visitation. The pastoral visitation request should be made to the next higher level (Regional Council of Spiritual Assistants) and should be directed to the regional spiritual assistant to which the fraternity is bonded. Do not hesitate to contact your regional area councilor for assistance if needed.

Article 14 Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the OFS

4. It is recommended that the pastoral and fraternal visits be carried out together with agreement beforehand on the program. The visitor or visitors will in good time communicate the object and the program of the visit to the council concerned. (Most of the following is done by the fraternal visitor) They will examine the registers and the records, including those relating to previous visits, to the election of the council and to the administration of goods. They will draw up a report of the visit they have conducted, seeing to it that it is appended to the proper records of the fraternity visited . They will send a report to the Minister and/or secretary of the council of the level which has conducted the visit. The post-visitation report is also sent to the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the fraternity visited (the Order to which the fraternity is bonded.)

When Should the Local Fraternity Council Invite Regional Assistants? .

IT NEEDS PERIODIC CHECK-UPS:

The fraternity minister and council have the responsibility of inviting the Regional Spiritual Assistant and the appropriate Regional Executive Council Member to local fraternity meetings and to council meetings. A triennial visitation is required, but more frequent “check-ups” are desirable.

The Regional Executive Council is the bond connecting the fraternity with the broader Franciscan entity. It’s becoming more and more imperative to strengthen this bond in our day, when so many exciting things are happening .

Have you scheduled your fraternal visitation with your area councilor for the year? When was your last one? What topics would you like the visitor to address? How will you communicate your local needs and concerns?

Another form of check-up is peer communication with members from other fraternities. Sharing experiences multiplies enthusiasm.

Are you on the mailing list for other fraternity newsletters? Do you receive the national newsletter, the TAU-USA? (secularfranciscansusa.org/tau-usa-newsletter/)

When was the last Day of Recollection or weekend retreat for your fraternity? If you feel your group is too small for an endeavor like this, have you considered joining with a neighboring fraternity to sponsor one?

Members of the Regional Council will be glad to help you make arrangements. An opportunity for annual or bi-annual reflection should be offered to all Secular Franciscans. Is the council doing its own “ongoing formation” by working through one of the many checklists available, or have council meetings become the dry bones of business busyness? Are you rotating the responsibility for council input, or has one person been handling it alone?

Have you polled the members about current concerns?

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR:

Just like the human body, the fraternity’s body sometimes signals its ill health. Contact your Regional Council Member or Regional Spiritual Assistant if your fraternity and your local assistant can’t seem to shake these symptoms:

The feeling of malaise; dryness; being stuck in a rut with your gathering format, programs, materials or even prayer types. (Antidote: variety; creativity; courage to experiment; examples from other fraternities.)

Factions; power struggles; competition, envy; officers or members trying to exercise authority inappropriately. (Antidote: attention to communication skills; outside mediation; conflict resolution; group reconciliation service.)

Lack of new vocations for prolonged periods of time or older members deciding to lapse. (Antidote: evangelization; attention to the image projected by the group; change in leadership; renewed enthusiasm.)

One person doing everything. (Antidote: honest discussion by council; renewal of commitment; reevaluation of priorities of group; teaching on giftedness.)

Difficulty in accepting our Rule (1978) or accepting changes in formation or other policies aimed to address the life of the Order and the needs of the Church. (Antidote: education; gentleness; outside speakers; attendance at regional and national meetings.)

Considering all this, would you say there's any easy "formula" to follow in guiding your fraternity "from Gospel to life and life to Gospel?"

The answer, of course, is a resounding "No!" Praise God that this is so.

Another story about Francis – who taught the world that Brother Sun praises God by being uniquely Brother Sun, and Sister Moon by being Sister Moon – tells why:

It seems that the early friars were caught up one day discussing the question, "Who is the 'perfect friar'?" Francis put a stop to this seed of competition and comparison by looking around the room and pointing to each person present .

Brother Angelo was the perfect friar for his courtesy, Francis said. And Brother Maseo for his natural good sense. Brother Leo was the perfect friar for his simplicity. Brother Bernard for his faith. Brother Juniper, for his patience. Brother John of Lauds for his sheer physical strength... and so Francis continued, pointing to each friar in turn. The message is clear.

The more completely we help each other offer our uniqueness to God, the more truly He is praised.

Francis did what was uniquely HIS to do. And as he lay dying, he blessed all of us with the challenge: "May Christ teach you what is yours." (Omnibus, 739)

These are just some of the ideas and signs to consider in helping you evaluate the life of both your council and fraternity. Some are mentioned more than once – they are important and have borne fruit when councils have had the courage to actively animate and guide and be more engaged. So again, congratulations on your election and please consider yourself a blessing to the sisters and brother who called you forth, love and support them and expect the same back from them for your gift of yourself!

Original:

-Page Zyromski SFO

-John Petrikovic, OFM Cap

Updated 2010:

-Cyl Maljan, OFS

2011

-Robert Fitzsimmons, OFS

NAFRA Formation - Care and Feeding of Councils

Sample Letter

When a Fraternity Fails to Request a Regional Visitation

[Insert Ministers Name, Fraternity Name]

Your Regional and Pastoral Visitations are due. Please contact me so we can set up a schedule for both visitations to take place .

If you have not contacted the Regional Spiritual Assistant to which your fraternity is bonded for a Pastoral Visitation, please do so as soon as possible. The region prefers to hold both the Regional Visitation and the Pastoral Visitation at the same time. This is not mandatory, but it is more convenient for all participants .

The Regional Spiritual Assistant for the province to which your fraternity is bonded is: [List the name, home address, e-mail address and telephone number of the regional spiritual assistant to which the fraternity is bonded] .

[Insert area councilor's name and title]

Note to Area Councilor: If the regional spiritual assistant cannot be present for the pastoral visitation at the time of your regional visitation, the pastoral visitation must be rescheduled, or the bonded regional spiritual assistant may delegate another to conduct the pastoral visitation.

Fraternal Visitation Preparation Information

“The local fraternity “should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.” (SFO Rule, Article 22)

“The fraternal visit is a moment of communion, an expression of the service and concrete interest of the secular leaders at the various levels, so that the fraternity may grow and be faithful to its vocation.” (*General Constitutions, Title VI, Article 94*)

Dear Fraternity Minister and Council:

As you are aware, we have scheduled a Fraternal Visitation by the Regional Area Councilor for your fraternity on [Date]. With this letter and attached documents, I hope that you will be fully prepared for a successful visitation .

Among the various initiatives to achieve the purpose of the visit, special attention will be given:

- To the validity of the formation, both initial and permanent;
- To the relations entertained with other fraternities at the different levels, with Franciscan youth, and with entire Franciscan family;
- To the observance of the Constitutions, the Statutes, and the regional guidelines;
- To the fraternal presence in the host Church, Monastery, organization, etc.;
- To the state of the bond of unity of the Order, i.e., to deepen the fraternity’s dialogue and cooperation with the Region; and
- To dialogue and collaboration with the fraternity Council and the individual members.

A Fraternal Visit takes place in three stages:

Preparation: The Council and members should thoughtfully and prayerfully conduct a self-evaluation as they prepare for the Fraternal Visitation. The Pre-Visitation Questionnaire provides most of the information necessary to assist the visitors, but we’d like to hear from the individual Council members as well. Included with this preparation information you will find:

- a. **Guidelines for the Fraternal Visitation of a Local Fraternity** developed by a collaborative effort of Conference of Spiritual Assistants and the National Fraternity to help ensure a productive visitation;
- b. **Fraternity Minister Checklist** for the minister to use as needed;
- c. **Pre-Visitation Questionnaire** to be completed by the council jointly and returned to the visitor no later than two weeks before the visit;
- d. **Fraternity Council Self-Evaluation** to be completed by each council member individually, returned to visitor two weeks prior to visit.

The visitor will review any previous audit or verification of the financial and property management of the Council, the register of the accounts and every document pertaining to the property of the fraternity and, the checkbook. The visitor will review the last three years of the Treasurer’s Annual Report and the last 12 months of all bank statements and receipts.

The visitor will check the records of the elections of the council and the minutes of the council meetings and will request canonical documents for review. He or she will evaluate the quality of the service offered to the fraternity by the minister and by the other leaders and will consider with them the solution to problems that may arise.

Visit: In terms of opening and closing prayers, *The Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* will be followed referencing page 50. The agenda for the day will typically include the following items.

- Fraternity Meeting
- Meeting with Council:
- Introduction and Overview
- Documentation Review
- Closing and Next Steps
- Individual Meeting(s) (private) as requested

Report: The Visitor(s) will prepare a written report that will provide the fraternity with observations and recommendations. Copies of the reports will be sent as follows: one to the Fraternity Minister (to be shared with the members of the fraternity); one to the Spiritual Assistant; one to the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the Province to which the fraternity is bonded; and one to the Regional Minister to be retained in his/her file .

The Fraternal visit is carried out in the name of the Church and serves to guarantee and promote the observance of the Rule and Constitutions and fidelity to the Franciscan charism. It is hoped it will be experienced as a moment of grace whereby through the assistance and recommendations of the visitor(s), the fraternity will grow in its faithfulness to its vocation, and its members challenged to deepen their fraternal life .

Thank you for taking the time to work on these materials. Your preparation is necessary and extremely useful in the upcoming Fraternal Visit. I look forward to receiving the Pre-Visitation Questionnaire and Self Evaluations prior to our meeting and am excited to visit the whole Fraternity as well as the council.

Your Name

Area Councilor

St . Margaret of Cortona Regional Secular Franciscan Order

Your email Your address

Your phone number

Pre-Visitation Questionnaire Completed by the Fraternity Council

The purpose of this document is to assist fraternities to prepare for the fraternal visitor.

- The completion of this questionnaire is meant to be a collaborative effort accomplished by the entire fraternity council. They may wish to meet together, discuss, and reflect upon the questions and their answers . *It is not intended for one person to fill out.*
- A copy of the completed questionnaire is to be returned by email to the regional area councilor before the Fraternal Visitation. The area councilor will email the Pre-Visitation Questionnaire to the Pastoral Visitor in advance of the Pastoral Visitation .
- A copy is also to be kept for the records of the local fraternity .

Have the following available at the fraternal visitation:

- Canonical Establishment available at the time of the visitation
- Fraternity Register
- Minister’s Binder, etc.
- Secretary’s Binder/Council minutes since last elections, etc.
- Formation Director’s Binder
- Attendance records for inquirers and candidates, etc.
- *FUN Manual*
- Financial and bank statements, etc.

Information Required:

Name of your Fraternity: _____

Location of your Fraternity: _____

Date Canonically Established: _____

Canonically Bonded to: OFM OFM Cap. OFM Conv. TOR

Date of council elections: _____

Members of the current council:

Minister: _____

Vice-Minister: _____

Secretary: _____

Treasurer: _____

Formation Director: _____

Councilors: _____

Spiritual Assistant: _____

Are any of your current council members appointed? Yes No If yes, who?

Does each council member know their responsibilities per the General Constitutions? Yes No

Scheduled Fraternity Meeting Day: _____ Time: _____

Fraternity Meeting Place: _____

Scheduled Council Meeting Day: _____ Time: _____

1. Fraternity Statistics:

Aspirants: _____ Inquirers: _____ Candidates: _____ Active Professed: _____ Excused Members: _____

2. Introduction and Aspirant Formation:

Do you hold an annual open house or other event to encourage interest in the Secular Franciscan

Order? Yes No If no, why: _____

Do you have an application and interview process for newcomers? Yes No

Does your Council review the applications? Yes No

Is there a mutual discernment process between the council and the individual at each stage of formation concerning the person's call to the SFO? Yes No

3. Initial Formation (inquirer, candidate):

What resources do you use for your initial formation programs? _____

Are the Rule and the Constitutions integrated in this phase of formation? Yes No

How often? _____

What structure do you use for formation? _____

When do the formation groups meet? _____

4. Ongoing Formation:

What structure do you use for ongoing formation? _____

Are the Rule and the Constitutions integrated in this phase of formation? Yes No

If yes, how often? _____

What resources do you use for ongoing formation? _____

Who has input in determining ongoing formation for the fraternity? _____

How might the quality of ongoing formation be enhanced? _____

Are guest speakers invited to speak at ongoing formation gatherings? Yes No

Is the Spiritual Assistant invited to speak, on occasion, at ongoing formation? Yes No

If no, why not? _____

Does the Spiritual Assistant attend inquirers/candidates sessions? Yes No

What are the style and quality of the monthly meeting? _____

5. Spirituality (Please address the following areas):

What resources does your fraternity use for Common Prayer? _____

How does the fraternity's embody Franciscan gospel values? _____

Describe the fraternity's involvement in the life and activities of the local parish(es) to which its members belong: _____

6. What is the quality of integration of life and work in the fraternity? _____

7. Does your fraternity have an apostolate(s)? Yes No If yes, Please list:

8. What do you feel is the quality of spiritual assistance provided to your fraternity? _____

9. What is the quality of integration of life and work in the fraternity? _____

10. Has the fraternity made any efforts toward increasing vocations to the SFO or within the Church as a whole? Yes No _____

11. Does the fraternity publish a monthly newsletter? Yes No
Do you forward the newsletter to the regional web administrator? Yes No
Do you have a fraternity website? Yes No If so, provide website address

12. What efforts or accomplishments is your fraternity particularly proud of? _____

13. What are your concerns, needs or problems? _____

14. What questions or issues do you feel that the Fraternal Visitor can address? _____

15. Describe the quality of fraternity's participation in regional activities: _____

16. What are your fraternity's future goals?

Sample Letter

A letter to the Local Minister who has not sent back the Pre-Visitation Forms

[Ministers name]

Next month [date] your fraternity is scheduled for a regional visitation. Please send me your Minister "Pre-Questionnaire Form" as soon as possible. Please have your council members either e-mail me their "Individual Council Self Evaluations" or send them to me by postal delivery. They should not be returned to you . They should send the evaluation to:

(Area Councilor's home address_

or

(Area councilor's e-mail address)

If you have not contacted the Regional Spiritual Assistant your fraternity is bonded to for a pastoral visitation, please do so as soon as possible. The region prefers to hold both the regional visitation and the pastoral visitation at the same time. This is not mandatory but it is more convenient for everyone.

Below is a list of the Spiritual Regional Assistants:

(Name)

)Title)

Note Area Councilors: If a spiritual assistant is not available to conduct a pastoral visitation at the same time as the fraternal visitation, the pastoral visitation should be scheduled at another time.

Fraternity Council Self-Evaluation for Each Council Member

Copies of this questionnaire are sent to the Fraternity Minister no less than two months prior to the time of visitation. They are in turn distributed to the fraternity's Council Members.

The questionnaire is meant to be completed by each Council member separately. It is not to be a collaborative effort. The purpose is to provide each council member an opportunity to voice praise, compliments, concerns, or problems.

Additional information on specific questions may be added on the back of the questionnaire or on a separate page.

The completed questionnaire is to be returned at least two weeks before the date of the visitation directly to the Fraternal Visitor by email or mail. The contents will be shared with the Pastoral visitor:

Name _____ Title _____

Fraternity _____¹ _____ Date _____

1. Do the council members attend council meetings and fraternity meetings faithfully? Yes No
2. Do the council members fulfill their duties responsibly?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

3. How would you rate the council in regard to task performance for council meetings and fraternity meetings? Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

4. Does the council give priority to the spiritual well-being and growth of the fraternity?
 Always Sometimes Rarely Never

Comment: _____

5. Does the council seek to give creative leadership to the fraternity, or just "manage the shop"?
 Always Sometimes Rarely Never

Comment: _____

6. What goals should the council set for itself in the future?

7. How would you rate the leadership of the fraternity's minister?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

8. Does the minister see that each council member fulfills his or her responsibilities?

- Always Sometimes Rarely Never

Comment: _____

9. Does your minister share all official correspondence with you?

- Always Sometimes Rarely Never

10. How would you rate the spiritual assistance your fraternity receives?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

11. Are the fraternity's records kept faithfully and adequately?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

12. How well is the financial planning for the fraternity done according to Franciscan values?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

13. How would you rate your fraternity meetings?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Comment: _____

14. What means is the council using to develop a greater sense of community in the fraternity?

15. Are the fraternity members as a whole able to share in the long- and short-range planning of the fraternity? Yes No

16. Is the *Ritual* used regularly at meetings, especially at elections, professions and receptions?

- Yes No

17. Does the fraternity use the *Liturgy of the Hours* regularly at its meetings? Yes No

18. Please rate the fraternity's functioning in regard to the Commissions. *Excellent rating would be appropriate if the fraternity had at least appointed one member as a contact person for that area; that person kept up with and reported on what was happening at the Regional and National levels; and the fraternity itself is involved in an active way in that area.*

Formation: Excellent Good Fair Poor

JPIC¹: Excellent Good Fair Poo

Youth: Excellent Good Fair Poor

19. What is your fraternity's potential to attract new members?

20. Does the fraternity understand and celebrate its identity as Franciscan penitents while encouraging growth in ongoing conversion in its brothers and sisters?

¹ Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

FRATERNITY MINISTER’S CHECKLIST IN PREPARATION FOR VISITATION

This checklist should be completed by the Minister of the Fraternity prior to the Fraternal Visitation and should be made available to the Visitor(s) when they come. The Minister should keep the original of this form in his/her file for transmission to the newly elected Minister when the time comes. Please remember that it is the duty and obligation of each member of Council to transfer all appropriate manuals, records, and documents to the newly elected officers as part of the Chapter of Elections.

If the fraternity keeps electronic files rather than binders, please provide computer access to these files at time of visit.

FRATERNITY COUNCIL:

- _____ Each office filled by properly elected or appointed professed member¹
- _____ Spiritual Assistant appointed for the fraternity
- _____ Consistent monthly Fraternity Council meetings
- _____ Records of Council decisions regarding membership (lists of excused or dispensed members; delinquent members, pastoral decisions, related correspondence)

FRATERNITY LIFE:

- _____ Consistent time and date for monthly gatherings
- _____ Consistent monthly initial formation meetings
- _____ Program of ongoing formation provided to the fraternity
- _____ Annual retreat provided for the fraternity
- _____ Retreat provided for Candidates prior to Profession
- _____ Regional programs participated in by fraternity representatives
- _____ Fraternity apostolate accepted by membership
- _____ Annual roster of membership (Provided to all members, and kept on record)

DOCUMENTS ON FILE²:

- _____ Document of Canonical Establishment
- _____ Fraternity Membership Record Book (Register)
- _____ Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order
- _____ **Minister’s Binder(s)**, containing copies of:
 - _____ Description of the duties of the Office of Minister
 - _____ Agendas for Council and Fraternity Meetings
 - _____ Minutes of Fraternity and Council Meetings
 - _____ Annual Reports submitted to the Region
 - _____ Election Procedures, including description of duties of each Office
 - _____ Visitation Reports
 - _____ Reports of Member Status (transfers, withdrawals, etc.)
 - _____ Correspondence
 - _____ Fraternity Membership Directory

¹ See SFO General Constitutions, Title IV, Articles 76 through 84, inclusive.

² Electronic document-keeping is permitted. Discs of the “documents on file” should be provided to the newly elected Minister.

Formation Director's Binder(s), containing copies of:

- ◆◆◆◆◆ Description of the duties of the Office of Formation Director
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Regional Formation Manual
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Description of Inquirer Formation Program
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Description of Ongoing Formation Program
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Reports on Inquirers and Candidates (including attendance and progress)

Secretary's Binder(s), containing:

- ◆◆◆◆◆ Description of the duties of the Office of Secretary
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Agendas and Minutes of Fraternity and Council Meetings (Council Agendas and Minutes should be kept together; Fraternity Meeting Agendas and Minutes should be kept together, but in the same binder)
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Chapter of Election Reports
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Reports of Member Status (transfers, withdrawals, etc.)
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Correspondence
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Copies of current and past fraternity newsletters
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Inventory of what the fraternity owns (equipment, furniture, books, tapes, videos, etc.)
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Directory of Fraternity membership

Treasurer's Binder(s), containing:

- ◆◆◆◆◆ Description of the duties of the Office of Treasurer
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Treasurer's Reports (provided by Treasurer to Council and made available to the members of the Fraternity)
- ◆◆◆◆◆ A bookkeeping ledger of income and expenses (reconciliation of the Fraternity's ~~and~~ should be done monthly).
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Audit Reports (prepared the last year of the Treasurer's term by a member of the Fraternity who is not serving on Council)

Historian's Binder (containing history of the fraternity, special events, news clippings, pictures, etc.)

OTHER RESOURCES:

- ◆◆◆◆◆ Extra copies of the Rule and Constitutions
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Handbook for Spiritual Assistance
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Guidelines for Initial Formation
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Resources for Initial formation
- ◆◆◆◆◆ Availability of fraternity library

The Fraternity Gathering

Rule 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.”

At a fraternal visitation, the area councilor should look for the following:

1. Exploration, through ongoing formation, the spirit of Francis and Clare and the Franciscan way of life
2. Sharing and support for fellow members
3. A period of social time together
4. Coming together in community to pray together

Ongoing Formation:

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

Business:

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

Social Time:

Social time is a very important part of each fraternity gathering. This is the time when Franciscan brothers and sisters are present to each other informally and joyfully. 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.

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.

Area Councilors should be aware of the following:

Affiliate Orientation Plan

Article 53.5 General Constitutions

The national statutes can indicate special forms of association with the fraternity for those who, without becoming a member of the OFS, want to participate in its life and activities.

Article 103. 1 General Constitutions

Remaining faithful to their own identity, the fraternities will take care to make the most of each occasion for prayer, formation, and active collaboration with other ecclesial groups. They should welcome with pleasure those who, without belonging to the OFS, wish to share its experiences and activities.

Article 18. 13 NAFRA Statutes Affiliation with a local fraternity

- a. Those who, without belonging to the OFS, wish to participate in its life and activities (See [GC Article 53.5](#) and Article 103.1) according to Franciscan principles and teachings, may be welcomed by the local fraternity, so as to make their communion living and effective. Individuals wishing to become affiliates should make their desire known by a written request to the local fraternity council, which makes a decision regarding the request.
- b. These affiliate brothers and sisters will have no juridical bond with the Secular Franciscan Order and are, therefore persons welcomed to love and be loved “as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ” (OFS Rule 13). They may share the experiences and activities of the fraternity, without the right to vote .
- c. In order that the identity of the fraternity not be altered, the number of affiliates may not exceed 40% of the number of active professed members of a fraternity.
- d. Regional councils have the right to establish their own guidelines for the acceptance of affiliates .

Process

- Before proceeding with a request for affiliate status, read pages 13-25 in *Praying with Francis of Assisi*; the section “Is praying with Francis for you?” and the overview on Francis and Franciscan Spirituality .
- Before responding to a request for affiliate status, read General Constitutions Article 53.5 and Article 103.1 and NAFRA Statutes Article 18.13).
- An interested individual makes a written request to the local fraternity minister and is interviewed by a member of the local fraternity council.
- A sponsor (a professed SFO) is assigned and orientation materials are provided.
- Should a person in affiliate status seek to become a professed member of the SFO, then the requirements of the formal formation program supersede all parts of the affiliate orientation plan. Affiliation orientation does not shorten or alter the norms of the Formation Program of the SFO.

Note that at the beginning of affiliate orientation the local fraternity minister and assigned sponsor must clearly advise that the affiliate, once approved, has no juridical bond, no right to vote or hold office, nor any official status within the SFO.

Orientation

- The sponsor and affiliate in process meet monthly to complete 12 sessions from one of the suggested resources:
 1. *Praying with Francis of Assisi*, Joseph Stoutzenberger & John Bohner, St. Mary’s Press

2. *A Retreat with Francis and Clare of Assisi: Following our Pilgrim Hearts*, Murray Bodo, OFM, and Susan Saint Sing, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996
 3. *Francis and Clare, A Gospel Story*, Helen Julian, CSF, The Word Among Us, 2005
 4. *Francis, the Journey and the Dream*, Murray Bodo, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2012
 5. *The Way of St. Francis: The Challenge of Franciscan Spirituality for Everyone*, Murray Bodo, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press. 1995
- Concurrently with beginning the 12 sessions, the person seeking affiliate status is presented with and asked to read some selections on Franciscan Spirituality.
 - On the recommendations of the sponsor and local minister, the local council approves the affiliate.
 - Once approved, the initial affiliation is made for a period of two years and commences with a simple welcoming in the context of a fraternity social gathering (meeting, potluck, picnic, but not a Mass or a Rite), and a simple certificate of affiliation is presented.
 - A medal of St. Francis may be presented, but not the Tau or Tau jewelry, which are reserved for the members of the Order.

Ongoing

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

Visitor's Questionnaire Sheet for Visitation

Name of the Fraternity: _____ Fraternity No. 57-1 _____

Members of the Council:

Minister: _____

Vice Minister: _____

Secretary: _____

Treasurer: _____

Formation Director: _____

Councilor(s): _____

Active Professed: _____ Excused Members: _____ Candidates: _____

Inquirers: _____ Inactive Members: _____

Visitor will review the following:

1. Canonical Documents
2. Letter from Provincial bonding the fraternity
3. Minutes of Council Meetings past three years
4. Treasurer's Reports for the past three years (provided by Treasurer, circulated to Council, made available to the membership and appropriately audited)
5. Formation Director's reports on candidates (including attendance and progress)
6. Annual rosters of membership (Provided to all members and kept on record)
7. Procedures for storing applications and required documents from candidates such as Initial Application, Baptismal Certificate, First Communion Certificate, Confirmation Certificate, Marriage Certificate, and Annulment Certificate if applicable. If applicable, a diocesan clergy wishing to enter the Secular Franciscan order, if ordained, copy of letter verifying faculties. Notice of Dismissal, etc.

Questions for the council at time of fraternal visitation:

1. How often does your Council meet?
2. What means is the council using to develop a greater sense of community in the fraternity?
3. Is the meeting time and date a problem?
4. Is there fellowship outside the fraternity among council members and fraternity?
5. Are your members involved in outside activities as a fraternity?
6. What outreach programs are your fraternity members involved in?
7. What other activities are engaged in within the fraternity throughout the year?
8. What is your fraternity's plan to attract new members?
9. Do you have a Theme for the Year?
10. What Goals should the council set for itself in the future?
11. Do you contact the region's Database Manager, Mary Lou Coffman, OFS, when change of status

for a member occurs?

Visitation Stipend

*According to the Statutes of the National Fraternity
of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America:*

Article 18.8

The local fraternity will present to the Regional Minister or his or her delegate and to the Regional Spiritual Assistant or the representative of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants a stipend appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required at the time of fraternal and pastoral visits, and also on the occasion of their presiding over and witnessing elections .

Sample Cover Letter

**(for Draft of Regional Visitation Report
to be reviewed by fraternity minister)**

(Name of Minister),

Again, thank you for allowing me to visit such a wonderful group of Secular Franciscan sisters and brothers. It was a pleasure meeting all and to see such a faith filled group of Franciscans.

Attached please find my draft report of your recent visitation. Please read it over and return to me, indicating any corrections or additions you feel are necessary. Once I have completed the draft, I will forward to the regional minister as a final report.

Thank you and the members of your council for your servant leadership in your fraternity.

(Area Councilor Name and Title)

Regional Visitation Report

Fraternity: _____ No. 57-1 _____

Date of Visitation: _____

Gathering Address: _____

Date Canonically Approved: _____

Canonically Bonded Order: OFM OFM Cap. OFM Conv. TOR

The following Council Members were elected on: _____

Minister: _____

Vice Minister: _____

Secretary: _____ (elected) (appointed)

Treasurer: _____ (elected) (appointed)

Formation Director: _____ (elected) (appointed)

Councilor: _____ (elected) (appointed)

Councilor: _____ (elected) (appointed)

Spiritual Assistant: _____

OFM OFM Cap. OFM Conv. TOR Other

Meeting Day/Time: _____

Meeting Place: _____

Scheduled Council Meeting Day/Time: _____

Aspirants: _____ Candidates: _____ Excused: _____ Affiliates: _____

Inquirers: _____ Professed: _____ Withdrawn: _____

Regional Visitation Report

Fraternal Assessment

The fraternal assessment is based on a meeting with the Council and attending the fraternity gathering.

The Meeting with the Council included the following:

Met with council lasting: __hours and ___minutes.

State of the Fraternity's record keeping, minister binder, secretarial and financial records, Formation, and other necessary records:

Name of Minister: _____

Ministers Binder:

1. Condition of the Ministers Binder: [] Excellent [] Good [] Fair [] Poor

Explain: _____

2. Do you have an archivist? Yes [] No []

3. Who maintains the documents? _____

4. Where are the records stored?

Explain: _____

5. Does the fraternity publish a monthly newsletter? Yes [] No []

6. Does the editor forward the newsletter to the regional website administrator? Yes [] No []

7. Does the fraternity have a website? Yes [] No []

If so, provide the website address: _____

Name of Secretary _____

Secretary Reports:

1. Were council meeting minutes presented? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

2. Was the fraternity register available? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

3. Condition of register? Excellent [] Good [] Fair [] Poor []

Explain: _____

4. Was A letter of Canonical Establishment of the fraternity present for review? Yes [] No []

5. Was a copy of the last Report of Elections presented? Yes [] No []

Name of Treasurer: _____

Treasurer Reports:

1. Was the latest Audit Report available? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

2. Did Treasurer produce financial and bank statements? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

Name of Formation Director: _____

Formation Directors' Binders and Files:

1. What resources do you use for your initial formation programs?

Explain: _____

2. What resources are used for ongoing formation?

Explain: _____

3. What structure do you use for ongoing formation?

Explain: _____

4. Who has input in determining ongoing formation?

Explain: _____

5. Are guest speakers invited to speak at ongoing formation gatherings? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

6. Is the spiritual assistant invited to speak, on occasion, at ongoing formation? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

7. Were Attendance records for Inquirer and Candidates available for review? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

8. *Was Up to Now* (FUN Manual) available for review? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

9. Does the spiritual assistant attend inquirer/candidates' sessions? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

10. Were Sacramental documents available for viewing? Yes [] No []

See requirements and sites below:

If no, explain: _____

Below are the National Statutes and FUN Manual requirements:

NAFRA National Statutes Article 19:2

Article 19. Formation

2. Initial Formation:

- d. To be admitted to the SFO in the United States, a person must be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (i.e., having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) in addition to being an actively practicing Catholic.

For Up to Now (FUN) Manual

The following documents must be on file prior to the Rite of Admission and should be obtained early in the Inquiry Phase:

- Baptism Certificate, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation documents annotated with other sacrament dates.
- If married, provide verification of validity.
- Decree of Nullity, if applicable.
- If ordained, provide copy of a letter verifying faculties.
- Two letters of recommendation, one being from the Inquirer’s pastor.

NOTE: It is recommended that all information forms, sacrament records, interview observations, correspondence, letters of recommendation, and other notes be kept in a confidential file folder for each prospective member. This will help the Fraternity Council in its discernment process.

For the Formator 3-23-2011 Page 18 of 26

A Must Do: As stated in the National Statutes and Fun Manual a copy of the sacramental documents are to be placed in a file and stored in a safe place.

11. Do you have a Formation Team? Yes [] No []

If no, explain: _____

The Regional Visitor’s observation of the fraternity gathering:

1. The structure of the fraternal visitation fraternity gathering.

Explain: _____

2. The number attending the fraternal visitation gathering: _____

3. Additional Remarks: _____

Fraternity Life

Style and quality of monthly gatherings:

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

The quality of integration of life and work in the Fraternity:

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

Apostolates:

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

Manner and quality of vocational promotion in the Fraternity:

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

Quality of Fraternity's participation in district and regional activities:

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

Future Goals:

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

What are your concerns, needs, or problems?

Explain: _____

(This information can be taken from the Pre-Questionnaire)

Fraternal Visitor: _____

Respectfully submitted:

/s/ _____, OFS Date: _____

Title: _____

Title VI
THE FRATERNAL VISIT AND THE PASTORAL VISIT

The Pastoral Visit

Article 95

1. The pastoral visit is a privileged moment of communion with the First Order and the TOR. It is carried out also in the name of the Church and serves to guarantee and promote the observance of the Rule and the Constitutions and fidelity to the Franciscan charism. The visit is carried out with respect to the organization and the law proper to the OFS itself .
2. Having verified the canonical establishment of the fraternity, the visitor will give attention to the relations between the fraternity and its spiritual assistant and the local Church . The visitor will meet the pastors (bishop or parish priest) when this is opportune for fostering communion and service for building up the Church .
3. The visitor will promote collaboration and a sense of co-responsibility among the secular leaders and the religious assistants. The visitor is to examine the quality of the spiritual assistance given to the visited fraternity, encourage the spiritual assistants in their service and promote their continuing spiritual and pastoral formation.
4. The visitor will give special attention to programs, methods and experiences of formation, to the liturgical and prayer life, and to the apostolic activities of the fraternity.

Additional Responsibilities:

It is suggested that when the fraternity minister request the pastoral visitation and fraternal visitation, they take place at the same time, saving your fraternity an extra visit from the region.

The fraternity minister should contact the regional area councilor to request a fraternal visitation. The pastoral visitation request should be made to the next higher level (Regional Council of Spiritual Assistants) and should be directed to the regional spiritual assistant to which the fraternity is bonded. Do not hesitate to contact your regional area councilor for assistance if needed.

Checklist for Pastoral Visitation

Date and Time: _____

Fraternity: _____

Formation:

Number of Candidates _____ Inquirers _____ Aspirants _____

Check Register of:

- Reception:
- Profession
- Evaluate Community Prayer
- Evaluate Community Life and Living the Charism
- Evaluate Quality and Content of Formation
 - Initial
 - Ongoing
- Evaluate participation in region and local parishes
- Evaluate ministry of local Spiritual Assistant
 - Attendance at council meetings
 - Availability to fraternity
- Ascertain Involvement in apostolates
- Dialogue about setting one spiritual goal for

Give a short spiritual exhortation and assure fraternity of regional Spiritual Assistant's availability.

Anne Mulqueen, OFS delegated Regional Spiritual Assistant – May 2016

Elections in the General Constitutions and National Statutes

Article 31 General Constitutions

1. **Rule 21** "On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president) ." These offices are conferred through elections, in accordance with the Rule, the Constitutions, and their own Statutes. Only by way of exception or in the first phase of their establishment may fraternities exist without a regular council.

The council of the higher level will make the arrangements necessary for this inadequate situation only for the specific amount of time it takes to get a fraternity back on sure footing or to establish a new fraternity; to give its leaders the proper formation and to carry out the elections.

2. The office of minister or councilor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity, so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society.
3. The leaders of the SFO at every level should be perpetually professed, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan evangelical way of life, attentive to the life of the Church and of society with a broad and encompassing vision, open to dialogue, and ready to give and receive help and collaboration .
4. The leaders should see to the spiritual and technical preparation and animation of the meetings, both of the fraternities and of the councils. They should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. They should see to it that the decisions made are carried out and they should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters.

The Fraternity Council

Article 49 General Constitutions

2. The fraternity, meeting in an assembly or chapter, discusses questions regarding its own life and organization. Every three years, in an elective assembly or chapter, the fraternity elects the minister and the council in the way established by the Constitutions and statutes.

Title IV: ELECTION TO AND TERMINATION OF OFFICES

Article 76 General Constitutions

1. The elections at the various levels will take place according to the norms of the law of the Church [See Can. 164 ff.] and of the Constitutions

The convocation should be carried out at least one month in advance, indicating the place, the day, and the time of the election.

2. The elective assembly, or chapter, will be presided over by the minister of the immediately higher level, or by his or her delegate, who confirms the election.

The president or the delegate cannot preside over the elections in his or her local fraternity, nor the elections of the council of a higher level, of whose council he or she is a member.

The spiritual assistant of the immediately higher level or his delegate is to be present as a witness of the communion with the First Order and the TOR.

3. The president of the chapter and the assistant of the higher level do not have the right to vote .

4. The president of the chapter designates, among the members of that chapter, a secretary and two tellers .

Article 77 General Constitutions

1. In the local fraternity the perpetually professed of the same fraternity have active voice, that is can elect, and passive voice, that is can be elected. The temporarily professed have only active voice .
2. At the other levels, the following have active voice: the secular members of the outgoing council, the representatives of the immediately lower level and of the Franciscan Youth, if professed. It belongs to the particular statutes to establish more concrete norms in application of the preceding norm, taking care to assure the broadest elective base. The perpetually professed secular Franciscans of the corresponding area have passive voice .
3. Both the national and the international statutes – each for its own area – can establish objective qualifications regarding who can be elected to the various offices. [See [General Constitutions Article 31.3; National Statutes 11.2](#)]
4. The presence of more than half of the number of those having the right to vote is required for the valid celebration of an elective chapter. For the local level, the National Statutes can establish a different norm. [For the local level, see [NS Article 18.6](#): “No official business may be transacted at a Local Fraternity meeting unless a quorum is present. The quorum consists of a majority of active members who are not excused from attendance.”]

Article 78 General Constitutions

1. An absolute majority of the votes of those present, cast in secret, is required for the elections of the minister. After two inconclusive ballots, the voting continues between the two candidates who have obtained the largest number of votes or, in case there are more than two, between the two candidates who are oldest by profession. If there is still a tie after the third ballot, the older by profession will be considered elected .
2. The election of the vice minister proceeds in the same manner.
3. For the election of the councilors, after a first ballot without an absolute majority, a relative majority of the votes of those present, cast in secret, is sufficient, unless the particular statutes require a greater majority .
4. The secretary announces the result of the elections; the president confirms the election according to the Ritual, part II, chapter II, if all has been carried out properly and those elected have accepted their office .

Article 79 General Constitutions

1. The minister and vice-minister may be elected for two consecutive terms of three years each. For a third and final successive election to the office of minister or vice-minister, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary . [See [National Statutes 13.2](#)]
2. The outgoing minister cannot be elected vice-minister.
3. The councilors may be elected for additional successive terms of three years . Beginning with the third successive election, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary.
4. The general minister, vice-minister and presidency councilors can be elected for only two consecutive terms of six years.

5. The council of the higher level has the right and duty to invalidate the elections and to call them anew in all cases of in observance of the preceding norms .

Article 80 General Constitutions

The particular statutes may include further directives concerning elections, as long as they are not contrary to the Constitutions .

Statutes of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the USA

Article 3.5.

The National Fraternity Council meets in elective chapter every three years; the National Minister convokes this meeting at least two months in advance, indicating the place the day and the time of the election.

NS Section II

[Ed. Note: this applies also to regions, See [Article 23.4](#), and to local fraternities, See [Article 28](#).]

STATUTES FOR SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SFO Rome, 2002

Article 12.3.

The spiritual assistant is by right a voting member of the council and of the chapter of the fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities . Only in economic matters and in elections at any level does he or she not enjoy the right to vote .

**Secular Franciscan Order
St. Margaret of Cortona Region**

REQUEST FOR FRATERNITY ELECTION

Name of Fraternity: _____ 571- _____

Location: _____

The above-named fraternity requests a Chapter of Elections to be held at:

(Gathering Place)

(Street Address)

(City and State)

Our gathering is on the (_____) of the month.

We hereby request that the Region provide a Presider to conduct the elections, as well as a Friar Witness. The fraternity council has appointed a nominating committee. To confirm the above date, and for further information, please contact:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Send this form to your Regional Executive Councilor for action.

Place in Fraternity Newsletter or Distribute to Members Two Months Before Elections

The Offices in the Fraternity

Article 51

1. While firmly upholding the co-responsibility of the council to animate and guide the fraternity, the minister, as the primary person responsible for the fraternity, is expected to make sure that the directions and the decisions of the council are put into practice and will keep the council informed about what he or she is doing.
2. The **minister** also has the following duties:
 - a. to call, to preside at, and to direct the meetings of the fraternity and council; to convoke every three years the elective chapter of the fraternity, having heard the council on the formalities of the convocation;
 - b. to prepare the annual report to be sent to the council of the higher level after it has been approved by the council of the fraternity;
 - c. to 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;
 - d. to request, with the consent of the council, the pastoral and fraternal visits, at least once every three years.
 - e. to put into effect those acts which the Constitutions refer to his or her competence.

Article 52

1. The **vice-minister** has the following duties:
 - a. to collaborate in a fraternal spirit and to support the minister in carrying out his or her specific duties;
 - b. to exercise the functions entrusted by the council and/or by the assembly or chapter;
 - c. to take the place of the minister in both duties and responsibilities in case of absence or temporary impediment;
 - d. to assume the functions of the minister when the office remains vacant;
2. The **secretary** has the following duties:
 - a. to compile the official acts of the fraternity and of the council and to assure that they are sent to their respective proper recipients;
 - b. to see to the updating and preservation of the records and the registers, noting admissions, professions, deaths, withdrawals, and transfers from the fraternity;
 - c. to 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.
3. The **master of formation** has the following duties:
 - a. to co-ordinate, with the help of the other members of the council, the formative activities of the fraternity;
 - b. to instruct and enliven the inquirers during the time of initiation, the candidates during the period of initiation formation, and the newly professed;

- c. to inform the council of the fraternity prior to profession, concerning the suitability of the candidate for a commitment to live according to the Rule.
4. The **treasurer**, or bursar, has the following duties:
 - a. to guard diligently the contributions received, recording each receipt in the appropriate register, with the date on which it was given, the name of the contributor, or the one from whom it was collected;
 - b. to record in the same register the items of expense, specifying the date and the purpose, in conformity with the directions of the fraternity council;
 - c. to render an account of his or her administration to the assembly and to the council of the fraternity according to the norms of the national statutes;
5. The provisions regarding the rights and duties of the vice-minister, the secretary and the treasurer apply, with the appropriate adaptations, to all levels.

Election Requirements

The following information should answer questions the fraternity may have about the elections and should be discussed at a meeting prior to elections.

1. The elections will take the place of the gathering. [**National Statutes Article.18.6:** “No official business may be transacted at a Local Fraternity meeting unless a quorum is present. The quorum consists of a majority of active members who are not excused from attendance.”] The last duty of the outgoing minister will be to introduce the regional presider and the regional witness to the fraternity members.
2. Active professed and excused sisters and brothers are eligible to vote and to hold a council office. (See [NAFRA Statutes 18 7a and b](#))
3. Temporarily professed may vote, but may not hold a council office. Separate professed from non-professed
4. Inquirers and candidates may not vote in council elections.
5. More than half of “professed” (per the fraternity roster) must be in attendance to establish a quorum. (See [General Constitutions Article 77-4](#))
6. Only those present at the elections may vote; “absentee ballots are NOT allowed.” (See *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order* (Witnessing Elections page 56 (D))
7. Temporary and permanently professed members must be on time: arriving once the election begins makes one ineligible to vote.
8. All nominees must be present, unless there is some circumstance that legitimately prevents a candidate from attending, e.g., illness.
9. No one may be nominated from the floor if they are not present.
10. Once the presider closes the nominations, the voting must take place.

General Constitutions Article 79

1. The minister and vice-minister may be elected for two consecutive terms of three years each. For a third and final successive election to the office of minister or vice-minister, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary. [See [National Statutes 13.2](#)]
2. The out-going minister cannot be elected vice-minister.
3. The councilors may be elected for additional successive terms of three years. Beginning with the third successive election, a majority of two-thirds.

NAFRA Statutes Article 9: Quorum; Majority; Counting Ballots; Procedure

3. Where questions arise concerning procedures that are not covered by the Code of Canon Law, the General Constitutions or the National Statutes, reference may be made to Robert’s Rules of Order. The President of the Elective Chapter (i.e., the Secular Franciscan who presides), after taking advice, retains the authority to determine any matter of procedure.

Fraternity Election Procedures Before Elections

Nominations Committee

It is the duty of the Nominations Committee to ensure that each nominee meets the qualifications for the office, has reviewed the duties of that office, and is willing to serve if elected. The presider also has the duty to review all the nominations, including those from the floor, to make sure that they conform to the requirements enunciated by NAFRA. Those nominated from the floor must be present in order to accept the nomination.

The fraternity should make sure the environment is suitable for the election procedure.

Prerequisites include:

- Copy of the Regional Guidelines for the presider to review
- Copies of the Ritual for the presider and the secretary of the election
- A long table with four chairs facing the assembly
- A chalkboard, dry erase board, flip chart or similar item, in view of everyone, on which to write the names of each candidate and to tally votes
- A supply of blank paper and slips of blank paper for ballots
- Two baskets or other containers in which to collect the ballots
- A “roll call list,” prepared by the outgoing council or the nominations committee
- The members of the newly elected council will need copies of the Ritual and the Apostles Creed for use during the concluding prayers (See Ritual page 42)

Jan Parker OFS (NAFRA Secretary, 2009–2015 and current National Minister) compiled this “step by step” document in 2013. It is based on the procedures finalized by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, August 2, 1994, and conforms to the National Statutes, as revised and approved in 2013.

Fraternity Chapter of Elections

Nominations Slate

Name of Fraternity: _____ Fraternity No. _____

Nominations for Minister

Nominations for Vice Minister

Nominations for Secretary

Nominations for Treasurer

Nominations for Director of Formation

Nominations for Other (i.e. Councilor)

Nomination Committee Chair: _____

Signature _____ Date _____



The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order

Suggested Election Procedures

Before the Election:

The Presider will go over the following with the Secretary of Elections:

1. Instructions (Secretary does not tally on the board nor collect or distribute ballots)
2. The slate of nominees obtained from nomination committee
3. Make sure current council nominees are not seeking a third term in the same position. If they are, the vote must be two thirds of the number of professed voting
4. Has “**Ballot and Vote Count Tally Sheets**” (See [page 69-70](#)) or blank paper on which to write names and keep tallies for each vote, and has a “Report of Elections Form” (See [page 71](#))
5. Has a stroke board to report votes as they are counted. Number of attending professed must be written in the upper right corner of the stroke board .
6. Secretary of elections will inform the professed of the elected position, Ritual, page 42 after final tally vote .

The Presider will go over the following with the Tellers:

1. Teller #1 will count out loud (facing the professed members) the number of ballots corresponding to the number in the upper right corner on the stroke count board.
2. Teller #2 will recount out loud (facing the professed members) the number of ballots corresponding to the number in the upper right corner on the stroke count board.
3. Once the count is approved by the friar witness, the presider will ask the professed to raise their hands, and the teller will distribute the ballots.
4. The presider will make sure the professed have completed voting and have folded the ballots. Then the teller will collect the ballots .
5. Teller #1 will count out loud the number of ballots received; the number must match the number in the upper right corner on the stroke board. The ballots remain folded.
6. Teller #2 will recount out loud the number of ballots received; that number must match the number in the upper right corner on the stroke board. The ballots remain folded.
7. After the friar witness approves the count, teller #2 will go to the stroke count board, and teller #1 will read the name out loud. A stroke count will be placed next to the appropriate name for each vote.

Note: presider and secretary must have a copy of the *Ritual* bookmarked at page 42.85

Prior to the start of the elections:

The Minister of the Fraternity will introduce the Presider and the Friar Witness and turn the meeting over to the Presider of the Elections .

Presider of Elections Procedures

Introduces the friar witness, (or delegate) representing the Regional Spiritual Assistants of the region as the official ecclesiastical witness .

THANKS the outgoing council by having them stand and asking the fraternity applaud.

The Presider Will Inform the Fraternity

1. “This is a **prayerful** time for the fraternity, **silence** is essential during the election.”
2. If someone has a question during the elections, they should speak up immediately – not after all is said and done .
3. If someone needs to leave the room during the elections, please let the presider know. The election process will resume when the person(s) leaving the room returns. A re-count of professed members will be taken to ensure that the number eligible to vote matches the number on the upper right corner of the stroke count board .
4. The presider will request that fraternity hold applause until the one who has been elected accepts the election and is confirmed by the presider. (*Ritual*, page 42).
5. Introduce the secretary and tellers.
6. Separate the professed (at the front) from non-voters (near the back).

The following will be read to the Fraternity before the election process begins

REQUIREMENTS: “The leaders of the SFO at every level should be perpetually professed, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan evangelical way of life, attentive to the life of the Church and of society with a broad and encompassing vision, open to dialogue, and ready to give and receive help and collaboration.” ([Art. 31:3, General Constitutions](#))

“The leaders should see to the spiritual and technical preparation and animation of the meetings, both of the fraternities and of the councils . They should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. They should see to it that the decisions made are carried out, and they should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters.” ([Art. 31:4, General Constitutions](#))

Election Process Begins

The presider says: Let us put ourselves in the presence of the Lord.

Prayer - Come Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your love and fill the hearts of your faithful people with your spirit of dedication and Unity.

The regional witness prays from the *Ritual page 41*. The regional witness takes a seat at the table next to the Secretary/tellers when finished reading from the Ritual.

Information for Presiders:

Article 79

1. The minister and vice-minister may be elected for two consecutive terms of three years each. For a third and final successive election to the office of minister or vice-minister, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary.
2. The outgoing minister cannot be elected vice-minister.
3. The councilors may be elected for additional successive terms of three years. Beginning with the third successive election, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary.

The presider will inform the gathering:

Today we will be electing people to fill the following positions: minister, vice minister, secretary, treasurer, formation director, councilors if any.

During the Elections:

The presider:

1. Secretary does the “roll call of professed members eligible to vote.” Each professed member will say “here” when their name is called; a check will be placed before their name if present. If professed member is absent, an “x” will be placed before the name.
2. The Secretary informs the presider the total number of eligible temporarily professed and professed members of the fraternity. More than half of the professed must be present for elections to take place. A temporarily professed member may vote but may not hold office.
3. Obtains the slate of nominees from the nomination committee or elections secretary.
4. Reminds voters that for the minister and vice minister an absolute majority is needed.
5. Nominations from the slate for the position to be voted on are listed on the board by the teller.
6. Asks the election secretary if any current council nominees are seeking a third term. (They will need a minimum of two thirds of the votes to be re-elected.
7. Nominations from the floor are requested. The presider will ask three times: “Are there any nominations for the office of [name position]?” If a nominee accepts, the name will be added to the “slate” on the stroke count board, and the secretary adds the name on the tally sheet.
8. After the third request for nominees from the floor, the presider declares, “Nominations for [name position] are hereby closed.”
9. Facing the voters, the teller not assigned to stroke tally counts out loud the number of ballots to be distributed. This number must match the number in the upper right corner of the stroke count board/sheet.

10. Facing the voters, the second teller recounts the number of ballots to be distributed out loud. The number must match the number of eligible voters listed on the stroke count board/sheet in the upper right corner .
11. The presider asks the friar witness if the ballot count is correct .
12. The presider instructs the voters to place only one name on the ballot from the list of nominees on the board and then fold the ballot . **(If a name appears on a ballot but is not on the list of nominees on the board, the voting process will need to start over again.)**
13. The presider asks the professed members to raise their hands.
14. The teller who is not assigned to tally the votes on the board will distribute the ballots to professed members only.
15. The presider checks to make sure the professed have completed voting and **have folded the ballots**, The teller will then collect the ballots.
16. Facing the voters, the teller collects each ballot in a basket, returns to the front of the room, and counts out loud the number of ballots received **(Do not open ballots.)**
17. Facing the voters, the other teller recounts the number of ballots out loud to ensure that all ballots were collected .
18. The friar witness approves the ballot count .
19. The vote counting process begins .
20. After all the folded ballots are counted, the seated teller, facing the voters, will open them, one by one, announcing the name on each ballot out loud, while the secretary records the tallies. The second teller will place the stroke count on the board/sheet for all to see . After all ballots are read out loud, the presider asks the friar witness to confirm the stroke count.
21. If the number of votes does not equal the voters present, the voting process for that candidate must start over.
22. If the required number of votes is met and the tally numbers on the board are approved by the friar witness, the secretary of elections asks the nominee to stand, and reads from the **Ritual, page 42** .

The Presider:

If the person elected accepts, the presider **confirms the election, Ritual, page 42**, and the secretary of the elections **writes the name of the elected on the Report of Elections**. The fraternity may applaud.

Note: After two inconclusive ballots, the voting continues between the two candidates who have obtained the largest number of votes or, in case there are more than two, between the two candidates who are oldest by profession. If there is still a tie after the third ballot, the older by profession will be considered elected . [See [General Constitutions 78.1](#)]

This procedure is repeated for each elected office .

NATIONAL FRATERNITY of the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

Ballot and Vote Count Form

Fraternity _____ Date of Election _____

Eligible Voters _____

Quorum _____ [more than half the eligible voters must be present]

Number of votes needed for: Absolute _____ Relative _____ Two Thirds _____
[more than half] [highest number]

OFFICE	BALLOT #1	BALLOT #2	BALLOT #3
MINISTER			
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
VICE MINISTER			
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
SECRETARY			
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
TREASURER			
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

[Administrative Info: Active voice = the right to vote (permanently and temporarily professed); Passive voice = the right to be elected to office permanently professed. After two consecutive terms, a third term MUST be elected by two-thirds vote on the first ballot. Nominations from the floor must be called for three times. All elections must be carried out according to the SFO General Constitutions and National Statutes .]

NATIONAL FRATERNITY of the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

Ballot and Vote Count Form

OFFICE	BALLOT #1	BALLOT #2	BALLOT #3
FORMATION DIRECTOR			
COUNCILOR			
COUNCILOR			
COUNCILOR			
Presider			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Print Name		
Friar Witness			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Print Name		
Secretary of Elections			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Print Name		
Teller			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Print Name		
Teller			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Print Name		

Revised November 2017

NATIONAL FRATERNITY of the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

REPORT OF ELECTION

Fraternity Name: _____ # _____

Place of Election: _____ Date: _____

Secretary of Elections: _____

Tellers: (1) _____ (2) _____

Presider – Fraternal Witness: _____

Spiritual Assistant Witness: _____

Voting: _____

RESULTS OF ELECTION

Minister: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Vice Minister: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Secretary: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Treasurer: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Formation Director: Elected Appointed

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Councilor: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Councilor: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Attested to (Please sign): Secretary of Election: _____

Spiritual Assistant Witness: _____

Teller (1): _____

Teller (2): _____

The Apostles' Creed

(To be prayed at the appropriate time
by the newly elected minister after the Chapter of Elections .)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell;
on the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead .

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting .
Amen .

From the "Celebration of the Fraternity"
Chapter of Elections Reference Guide
from Saint Margaret of Cortona Region"

After the Election

1. The installation of the newly elected council takes place immediately.
2. The installation begins when the newly elected minister makes the Profession of Faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed in the name of the entire newly elected council. (Some fraternities have the tradition that all the members of the new council recite the Creed together.)
3. The presider confirms the installation according to the **Ritual, page 43**, beginning with the words, "May the God of hope..."
4. The Friar Witness begins the common prayer according to the **Ritual, page 43**, beginning with the words, "Let us pray...."
5. After the common prayer, all come forward to greet and congratulate the newly elected.
6. The ceremony concludes with the blessing by the friar witness.
7. Newly elected officers will see the election secretary as soon as possible. The secretary completes the official election results, including the names, addresses, phones, and e-mail addresses of the newly elected, on The Elections Report Form. Secretary, Tellers, Witness, and Presider will sign the Elections Report Form and Ballot and Vote Count Form.
8. The presider will take a picture of the newly elected council and e-mail it to Mary Lou Coffman, OFS, (marylousfo@gmail.com) for the *Up to Now* regional newsletter .

NOTES:

1. The presider is responsible for making sure "Ballot and Vote Count Form" (see [page 69](#)) and "Report of Election Form" (see [page 71](#)) are signed by the tellers, secretary, presider and friar witness (or delegate) for the elections. Make sure information is correct.
2. Presider directs the new council to set a date with past council members to meet as soon as possible to transfer records and discuss together important items that the new council should be made aware of .
3. Outgoing treasurer sets a date and time to meet at the bank where the fraternity's checkbook account is established to sign signature cards .

After the "Ballot and Vote Count Form" and the "Report of Election Form" are signed by the presider, witness, election secretary and tellers, the forms are distributed by the presider as follows:

1. The original "Ballot and Vote Count Form" and the "Report of Election Form" stay with the local fraternity for its files
2. One copy of each to the Regional Minister for the region's file*
3. One copy of each to the local Spiritual Assistant*
4. One copy of each to the Provincial Spiritual Assistant(s)*
5. One copy of each to the Regional Spiritual Assistant(s).*
6. One copy of each to the region's Database Manager – Mary Lou Coffman, OFS, marylousfo@gmail.com*

*Scanned or cell phone photos of documents are acceptable, perhaps even preferred.

Transition Phase After Elections

Responsibility

The current council has the responsibility to transition all fraternity documentation and records to the newly elected council after the completion of the Chapter of Elections.

Activities

Each departing council member should transfer all documentation directly to the newly elected member, along with any guidance or instructions about the information. In the case of the treasurer's documentation, the newly elected minister should appoint two members of the fraternity to conduct a review of the books prior to the transfer. This review should include all transactions, bank statements, and receipts since the last approved annual treasurer's report .

Support of Past Council Members

After the elections, the outgoing council members should make themselves available to help the incoming council members become acquainted and up to date on pending matters .

New council members who have not previously been on the council will not be aware of what their council position entails .

Whenever possible, the outgoing council members should make themselves available to help the new council in the transition process .

It is strongly recommended that outgoing council members work, for a period of time with the newly elected members taking over the position of the outgoing council member. It is also strongly recommended that the outgoing council meet with the newly elected council at the first scheduled council meeting.

Stipend for Elections

According to the Statutes of the National Fraternity of Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America:

Article 18.8. The local fraternity will present to the Regional Minister or his or her delegate and to the Regional Spiritual Assistant or the representative of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants a stipend appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required at the time of fraternal and pastoral visits, and also on the occasion of their presiding over and witnessing elections.

Regional Area Councilors - Familiarize yourself with the following:

Changes in Elected Offices

Article 31 General Constitutions

1. **Rule 21** "On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president)." These offices are conferred through elections, in accordance with the Rule, the Constitutions, and their own Statutes. Only by way of exception or in the first phase of their establishment may fraternities exist without a regular council.

The council of the higher level will make the arrangements necessary for this inadequate situation only for the specific amount of time it takes to get a fraternity back on sure footing or to establish a new fraternity to give its leaders the proper formation and to carry out the elections.

2. The office of minister or councilor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society.
3. The leaders of the SFO at every level should be perpetually professed, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan evangelical way of life, attentive to the life of the Church and of society with a broad and encompassing vision, open to dialogue, and ready to give and receive help and collaboration.
4. The leaders should see to the spiritual and technical preparation and animation of the meetings, both of the fraternities and of the councils. They should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. They should see to it that the decisions made are carried out and they should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters.

Vacant Offices

Article 81 General Constitutions

1. When the office of minister remains vacant as a result of death, resignation or other impediment of a definitive character, the vice-minister assumes the office until the end of the term for which the minister was originally elected.
2. If the office of vice-minister becomes vacant, one of the councilors is elected to the office of vice-minister by the council of the fraternity, to serve until the next elective chapter.
3. When the office of councilor becomes vacant, the council will proceed to substitute for him or her in conformity with its own statutes, to serve until the next elective chapter.

Incompatible Offices

Article 82 General Constitutions

The following are incompatible:

- a. the office of minister at two different levels;
- b. the offices of minister, vice minister, secretary, and treasurer at the same level.

Resignation from Office

Article 83 General Constitutions

1. When a minister of whatever level resigns during a chapter, that same chapter can accept the resignation .

When a minister resigns outside the time of chapter, that resignation must be presented to the council. If the resignation is accepted, it must be confirmed by the minister of the higher level; if the general minister is resigning, the confirmation comes from the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR .

2. The resignation of other offices is presented to the minister and to his or her council, who are competent to accept the resignation.

Removal from Office

Article 84 General Constitutions

1. In the case in which the minister does not fulfill his or her duties, the council concerned manifests its concerns in a fraternal dialogue with the minister. If this does not produce positive results, the council should inform the council of the higher level whose competence it is to examine the case and, if needed, by secret ballot, decide to remove the minister.
2. For a serious, public, and proved reason, the council of a higher level, after a fraternal dialogue with the person concerned, may, by a secret ballot, order the removal of a minister of a lower level.
3. When there is a serious reason to remove those who hold other offices of the council, it is the responsibility of that council to which they belong to make its decision by a secret ballot after there has been a fraternal dialogue with the person involved .
4. A recourse, which by itself suspends the action to remove someone from office, can be presented within thirty days to the council of the level immediately higher than the one which imposed the sanction .
5. The removal of the general minister belongs to the competence of the Conference of the General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR .
6. When there is a case of serious lack of concern or evidence of irregularities on the part of a minister or a council, the council of the next higher level conducts a fraternal visit of the council in question and, eventually, requests a pastoral visit. With charity and prudence, it will evaluate the circumstances uncovered and decide on the best way to proceed, not excluding the eventual removal of the council or leaders involved.

Appeal Process

Article 59 General Constitutions

If anyone is convinced that he or she has been wronged by a measure adopted, that person may appeal within three months to the council above the one that adopted the decision in question and, in successive cases, to further levels all the way up to the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO and, in the final instance, to the Holy See.

When the council receives a notice to appeal, the secretary will send the member's name and home address to Mary Lou Coffman, OFS, Regional Database Manager at marylousfo@gmail.com as soon as

possible. The information will be updated in the Regional and National Databases.

Sample Letter

Letter of Introduction as the New Area Councilor

(Name of minister or ministers),

On ***(date)*** at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, D .C ., I was elected as the Regional Executive Councilor for the ***(name of your area)***. I will be responsible for the following fraternities:

(list the fraternities in your area)

If you are not the current Minister of a fraternity listed above, please let me know and provide the current Minister's name, address, e-mail address and phone numbers, if possible.

I am asking each fraternity to submit the following updates:

- Date of last Fraternity Visitation from the Region
- Date of last Pastoral Visitation from the Region
- Date last attended a Regional Councilors Meeting for your area and who from your fraternity attended if applicable
- Any issues/problems your fraternity is experiencing with which the regional council may be able to help
- If your fraternity has a website, please send me the website address

Please feel free to contact me any time at ***(your e-mail address)*** - Cell: ***(your phone number)*** Home ***(your phone number)***

I am looking forward to working with all of you as we continue our spiritual Franciscan journey .

(your name and title)

Survey for a Fraternity in Distress

MEMBERSHIP STRENGTH

1. Do you feel comfortable asking colleagues and acquaintances to visit your fraternity?
2. Do you feel that your fraternity offers a wide variety of activities and opportunities to attract prospective members?
3. Do you feel fraternities services projects are worthwhile and rewarding?
4. Do you feel there is sufficient member interest in most fraternity projects?

COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPACT

1. Do you feel that your fraternity is having an impact on your community?
2. Do you feel inspired by how many opportunities your fraternity offers to create an impact in your community?
3. Do you feel your fraternities presence is viable and a major asset in your community?

MEMBER EXPERIENCE

1. Are your opinions about service fundraising and administration valued?
2. Do you feel that your fraternity meetings and events are spirit filled?
3. Are fraternity members properly recognized for their efforts?
4. Are fraternity members invited to use their talents on at least one committee?
5. Does your fraternity take appropriate time to celebrate and recognize fraternity and member achievements?

CONCERNS

1. Do you feel that the fraternity is moving in the right direction?
2. What changes would you like to see you to improve the fraternities overall performance?
3. What suggestions or ideas would you like to convey to the council members to improve life in the fraternity?
4. What problems or issues do you see that might hinder the growth of the fraternity at its members?
5. What apostolates would you like to see the fraternity involved in?

OVERALL INDIVIDUAL RATING (AVERAGE)

0 = Strongly Disagree

1 = Disagree

2 = Neither Agree nor Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

Spiritual Assistants



Each fraternity is bonded to a province of either the OFM, OFM Conventual, OFM Capuchin or Third Order Regular (TOR).

Article 90 General Constitutions

18. The principal task of the assistant is to communicate Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters .
19. The spiritual assistant is by right, with vote, a member of the council of the fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities . The spiritual assistant does not exercise the right to vote in financial questions.
 - d. the local council requests the assistant from the major superior of the jurisdiction responsible for the assistance.
20. The competent major superior, having heard the council of the fraternity concerned, appoints the assistant according to the norms of these Constitutions and of the Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order .

Suggested Links for Resources

Home Page for St. Margaret of Cortona Region – Individual fraternities and their websites can be found here:

<http://saintmargaretofcortona.org/>

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order:

<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/>

FUN Manual:

<https://saintmargaretofcortona.org/fun-manual/>

Formation Manual:

<http://www.nafra-sfo.org/Formation%20materials/>

US Conference of Catholic Bishops:

www.USCCB.org

Acknowledgments

Anne Mulqueen, OFS – Delegated Regional Spiritual Assistant

Bob Longo, OFS – Creator of the Regional Council Members Manual

Care and Feeding of Councils – (NAFRA website)

Chapter of Elections Reference Guide – Saint Margaret of Cortona Region

For Up to Now (FUN) Manual – “Nature of the Secular Franciscan Order” 3-23-2011

General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order

Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States

Mary Lou Coffman, OFS – For her great editing skills used in preparing this Manual

NAFRA Form Letters

NAFRA Statutes