

The Community of Francis and Clare

Rule and Journey of Life

Amended at annual Chapter, June 5, 2020

Preamble

A note on the organization of this Rule: The *Rule and Journey of Life* of the Community of Francis and Clare were ratified by the annual Chapter on May 8, 2019, at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in Chicago, Illinois. The Rule is divided into three separate sections of differing degrees of permanency: *The Sacred Rule*, *General Rule*, and *Franciscan Life: Guidelines*. *The Sacred Rule* is founded in Holy Scripture and will not be changed. *The General Rule* reflects the core values of this Community and, though more permanent, maybe modified after serious discernment as needs may arise. *The Franciscan Life: Guidelines* section is just as the title implies, guidelines that inform how the Rule is to be lived in our community and may be adapted to the needs and circumstances of life as they develop. Future versions of the *Rule and Journey of Life* may include a fourth section, which will be a customary of how we live more fully into our common life.

I. The Sacred Rule

The Rule of Life for the members of the Community of Francis and Clare (CFC) is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The central scriptures that guide our family are taken from the Gospel of Luke: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” (*Luke 10:27*)

From Romans: “Let your love be genuine, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (*Romans 12:9-18*)

From John: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (*John 14:6*)

Community of Francis and Clare
Rule and Journey of Life

From Matthew: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” (*Matthew 25:35-37*)

And from Colossians: “You are the People of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. Christ’s message in all its riches must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct each other with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.” (*Colossians 3:12-17*)

II. The General Rule

II - Section 1. Description

We are called to be a family and are committed to living the Gospel of Jesus that is informed by the lives and works of Francis and Clare of Assisi. We are called to create deep bonds of community with one another in companionship and mission by, “Loving and supporting one another more than a mother loves and supports her child according to the flesh.” (*Cf. Rule of Francis, 1223*). Our roots are also found in the Anglican Communion and its diversity of languages, cultures, and faith expressions. Each of us is at least 18 years of age and has been baptized and confirmed or received, in a church that is within the Anglican Communion, or a church that is in full communion with an Anglican Province, and in communion with the See of Canterbury. We are active in the life and sacraments of our local community and are in good standing within a local congregation and Diocese, respecting the authority of our Bishops. We pray deeply to seek the incarnate God in all creation and engage in ministry to love and serve God’s people. We live the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in contemporary expressions.

II - Section 2. Vision

We see ourselves striving to live a simple life that expresses our love of God and neighbor. We work to be prayerful, respectful, kind, inclusive, and responsible. We relish all of God’s creation. We identify with the voiceless and marginalized of our societies, knowing that Christ is with them. We aim to share our time, talent, and treasure with the hungry, poor, and those who God sends us to serve, live with, and love. We promote the values of human dignity, social justice, advocacy, and care for the environment. A key component of our vocation is contemplation and prayer and the process of reflection and reconciliation.

II - Section 3. Eucharist

As the Eucharist is the central action of God’s people, we are called to joyfully participate in it as often as possible. In the celebration of the Eucharist, we see a symbol and promise of what our life together means and is called to be. We sit at God’s Table where all are welcome, and all give thanks to God for the wonders of love. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist we are called to contemplate and imitate Christ in his humility and incarnation, made small and poor to enrich us, heal us, and love us. We are encouraged to participate in various ministries in the Eucharistic celebration.

II - Section 4. Prayer

A life of union with God requires times of stillness, contemplation, prayer, and meditation. Drawn by God into these spaces, we seek a life of deep personal prayer in all its expressions and are committed to the church’s daily prayer. We value prayer as it is expressed in personal, communal, and liturgical forms. Prayer is, among other things, the deliberate response to and an awareness of God that moves us to give thanks, intercede, praise, and

love God. In prayer we acknowledge our brokenness and healing. We empty ourselves, seek loving transformation, and give ourselves over to God as we are renewed by our relationship with God. Each member is to spend time every day in personal prayer. The Daily Office of the Church is our companion in the journey of prayer. Communal prayer with other members or in a local setting is to be practiced with frequency. Liturgical prayer, especially the Eucharist, is to be the central aspect of a member's prayer life.

II - Section 5. Study

Francis had a tender veneration for the Word and the name of Jesus. In his testament he confessed to his followers: "Wherever I come upon His most holy written words in unbecoming places, I desire to gather them up and I ask that they are collected and placed in a suitable place." (*Francis, The Testament of St Francis, 1226*). The Anglican tradition is deeply grounded in the centrality and transforming power of Scripture. We commit ourselves to the daily reading, the study of and meditation on the Word of God.

II - Section 6. Vocation

We experience our vocation as our response to God's love. We believe that in belonging to a community, our vocation, though personal, is enriched, challenged, supported, and encouraged by our faith family. Our vocations are unique to the individual and we share a common vision and values. As did Francis and Clare, we recognize that each member of this community is a gift from God (cf. *The Testament of St Francis, 1226*). The qualities and richness that each one of us brings to the Community are equally cherished and valued, as we encounter God in one another and our common life together. Rejoicing in the ancient and historic gift of our Franciscan way, we commit to discerning, supporting, and encouraging each other in our particular calls and vocations in the Church.

II - Section 7. Mission

Our mission is to love God and our neighbor. Renewed and transformed by our life of prayer, every member takes part in some form of ministry to God's people and creation. As followers of Christ, "who humbled himself, even to accepting death" (*Philippians 2:8*), we strive to live our lives in minority and simplicity, as the servants and subjects of all, peaceful and humble in heart (cf. *Regula non bullata, 16:6*). We seek as a community to engage God through the *Five Marks of Mission* recognized by the Anglican Communion. These marks are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

In the *Canticle of the Creatures*, Francis called all things in the creation his brother and sister. In his legacy we seek to live sustainably, reduce our carbon footprints, and actively care for God's creation. We will also seek to act as advocates for peace, justice, and the care of creation through education and modeling sustainable stewardship of God's good earth.

II - Section 8. Reconciliation

It is the Love of God that calls us to turn away from indifference and selfishness and instead fill our hearts with generosity, kindness, gentleness, and love. The certain knowledge that we stand in need of God's mercy and love to change our lives also gives us certain knowledge that others will also need this mercy and love. We do not judge one another. Reconciliation with God, all people, and all creation is a continuous attitude that places our focus on God's love rather than on our failings. Great emphasis and a humble awareness of the nature of forgiveness shall be stressed in the Franciscan manner. We understand that our collective ministry is one of reconciliation. We are called to announce the joy and love of God to all people as Francis and Clare taught us. It is in this announcement of the Good News that people may be drawn more deeply into the love of God.

II - Section 9. Formation

Formation is a lifelong process and is a progressive and transformative journey into a way of life that is centered on Jesus and his Gospel. We are formed by prayer, study, community, relationships, and ministry. Our desire is to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. The progression of our formation begins with Candidacy, which is a time to discern both faith in God and a vocation. Postulancy is a time to discern a Franciscan vocation and a life fulfilled by vows. The Novitiate is normally a two-year process that begins the limited membership in the Community and the novice promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience are taken. During this time the novice will reflect on the vows, community, ministry, prayer, and Franciscan living. Upon successful completion of the Novitiate, the member will profess the permanent vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The vowed Professed state is the full and complete membership in the community. Every member of the Community participates in formation. Formation reflects the individual needs of the Member with the values of the Community and is to be a nimble process that allows for modification and accommodation to meet the needs of the individual and the Community.

II - Section 10. Vows

Francis and Clare strove for humility and minority. They rejected the seductions of power, position, and status. We vow poverty, chastity, and obedience seeking to place these evangelical counsels into a contemporary expression (simplicity, fidelity, and humility).

The vow of poverty (simplicity) reminds us that God's love is uncomplicated and unconditional. We strive to live simply as an expression that God and God's love are

enough to sustain, nurture, challenge, and bring us to fullness. We know that all we have belongs to God and that possessions are only tools. We endeavor to avoid materialism and the accumulation of wealth, power, and status. Poverty assists us in our approach to others. We strive to be open to others and believe that all is a gift from God and to be cherished. We also strive to own nothing that stands between us, God, and our neighbor.

The vow of chastity (fidelity) reminds us that God is faithful in love. This vow centers itself on God's love. We in turn aim to respond to this love by being faithful to the love that God has placed in our lives. We want our love to be marked by gentleness, mutuality, respect, and dignity. Chastity is expressed in treating another person in a way that honors their person and the Christ within them. We renounce promiscuity and casual indifference. We will not use others for our selfish gain, desire, or pleasure. The vow of chastity also guides those who wish to be celibate as is appropriate with their status in life.

The vow of obedience (humility) reminds us that God is within and without us. Obedience calls us to listen for God in the beauty of creation, in the hearts of our companions, and in those we serve. We aim to approach the world with open hearts and humility. We try never to be so full of ourselves that we cannot listen to others. We desire to place the needs of others before our own. We seek to avoid arrogance and entitlement. We believe that in our community we can rely on the many ears of our family to help us discern God's will in our lives. Obedience opens us to hear God in all manners of life and in this we develop the spirit of hospitality.

II - Section 11. Active Participation.

Each Member of the Community must demonstrate a willingness to participate in the activities of the Community. These activities include attendance at the annual Chapter, engagement in the formation exercises and dialogue, local or regional gatherings of the Community, response to communications, and setting aside time for an appropriate period of reflection, rest, and prayer. The ministry of each member is to be communicated to the Chapter Council. Ministry takes many forms, such as parish work, social justice, health, teaching, intercessory prayer, facilitating prayer groups, contemplation, or other activities in keeping with the spirit of this rule.

II - Section 12. Habits and External Signs of Membership

The habit is an external sign of inward spirituality. Our greatest habit is that of charity. The habit is to be simple, practical, and modest. The clothing of novices normally takes place at the annual Chapter. The traditional habit of a simple brown tunic with a short capuche with hood, or a scapular, worn over the tunic and three knotted cord is to be preserved as best as possible. Professed Members wear the San Damiano Cross on their habit. Novices, as members of the community, are given the habit and cord without the San Damiano Cross. Postulants, as they continue to discern with the community, are given a medallion.

II - Section 13. Governance

We value the voice of each Member of the Community. Consensus is the norm for decision making. If voting is to occur, it will be among the Professed Members of the Community. The norm for discussion, deliberation, and decision is democratic. The Chapter Council is the elected leadership body of the Community and is made up of the Guardian and at least four Councilors, each serving a three-year term. The Guardian and Councilors may be re-elected to a total of no more than six consecutive years, and then must step aside. The Chapter Council serves the Community by listening and discerning with the Community and making decisions on behalf of the Community between annual Chapters. The Guardian and Councilors are elected from among the Professed Members of the Community who are trusted and are living into our Rule with wisdom and love. When making decisions in the Chapter Council, a consensus is the norm. If a vote is needed, the Guardian may serve as a tie-breaker. The work of the Guardian and Councilors is to be as transparent as possible for the benefit of the members of the Community. The Secretary and Treasurer are annually appointed by the Chapter Council and do not have voting privileges.

A. Disputes

Should a dispute arise between Members of the Community the first course of action is for the two Members to talk to each other and try to resolve the issue for it is written in Matthew 18:15, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over." If the dispute is not resolved, the Members involved in the dispute must inform a Councilor on the Chapter Council who will mediate the issue. If the dispute is still not resolved, the disputants are to request a group of three professed, with one being a Councilor, to mediate the process. As a last resort, if the dispute is still not resolved, the Bishop Visitor will be asked to settle the dispute, which will be the final determination. If the dispute is with someone on the Chapter Council, then the disputants will request the Guardian to be the arbitrator, or if it is with the Guardian, another member of the Chapter Council will be the arbitrator.

B. Leave of Absence and Probation

A Member may request a leave of absence for reasons of health or a personal matter. The granting of this is done by the Chapter Council. A Member may be placed on a leave of absence or probation if there is a serious question as to the member's fidelity to the Rule, the Constitution and Bylaws, or Safe Church practices and policies of their appropriate Province. This action will be done by the Chapter Council.

C. Constitution and Canons of the Church

The Community Members will acquiesce to the Constitution and Canons of the Province of the Anglican Communion in which they live, worship, and serve God's people.

D. Amendments to The *Rule and Journey of Life*

When the *Rule and Journey of Life* need to be amended, a committee will be formed that includes representatives from the Chapter Council and the membership. The committee will work in a transparent manner and seek the input of all members. Once the study and input have been completed, a final amended *Rule and Journey of Life* will be presented by Chapter Council to the entire Community for ratification at the next annual Chapter.

II - Section 14. Release from Community

Members may be released from their vows or formation stage by Chapter Council. Release from the Community may stem from a member's request, or a serious violation of the Rule, or grievous misconduct that violates Safe Church or ethical norms. Members may also be dismissed when they no longer actively participate in formation and community.

II - Section 15. Bishop Visitor

In accordance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, a Bishop Visitor is to be selected. Their duties include guarding the Rule, serving as an arbitrator in matters which the Community or its members cannot resolve through its normal processes, visiting the annual Chapter (when possible), being available to meet with individual Members as necessary, and being informed by the Guardian as to the status and standings of all Members of the Community. The Community will pledge their hospitality and transparency. The Community is an independent entity as defined by the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church.

II - Section 16. Ethical Conduct

All Members of the Community will complete and remain current with, their Diocese's Safe Church training or its equivalent to enhance and preserve the dignity, freedom, safety, and blessing of people. As our foundational Scripture states in Colossians 3:12, "you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." No Member of the Community may use their membership in the Community to serve to their advantage or purpose. Confidentiality will be maintained, as appropriate, for all, and by all, with regard to activities within the Community.

II - Section 17. Values

We value love, faith, hope, unity, diversity, inclusivity, dialogue, cooperation, interpersonal relationships, prayer (personal, common, and liturgical), adaptation to current needs, growth, ministry, renewal, gathering together, and democratic voice and governance. As Saint Paul has said, among us “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (*Galatians 3:28*)

III. Franciscan Life: Guidelines

III - Section 1. Description

The Community of Francis and Clare is a religious community canonically recognized by the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church. The Community is a registered non-profit corporation in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and has been granted tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. The Community carries liability insurance for the Board of Trustees, which is the Guardian and Chapter Council.

III - Section 2. Vision

We see ourselves as being drawn together by our common values and the diversity of their expressions. We find our strength in the depth and stability of our values as well as in the flexibility to live the Gospel in a practical and daily manner.

III - Section 3. Eucharist

All Members are encouraged to regularly take an active part in the celebration of the Eucharist. Members, either lay or ordained, are to serve with reverence and dignity as it accords with local tradition and custom. Within the Community, members may share their ministries at the Eucharist.

III - Section 4. Prayer

Each Member is expected to pray the Daily Offices of the Church. Professed and Novices are expected to pray the four-fold Daily Office. Postulants and Candidates are expected to pray at least Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

III - Section 5. Study

Members of the Community are to study Sacred Scripture, Franciscan sources, the lives of Francis and Clare, and other subjects that develop, strengthen, and deepen our understanding of God, love of neighbor, love of self, ministry, prayer, vows, and living a religious life. The Community is encouraged to form study groups, which are different from formation groups.

III - Section 6. Vocation

We have chosen to have a communal dimension to our vocation. Our vocation is our response to the love of God within the context of this community. This is expressed in our response to God as found in our healthy relationships with each other, including how we discern our individual calls and vocations within the community and the wider Church.

III - Section 7. Mission

Each Member will engage in some form of ministry, following in the example of Francis and Clare. This ministry will be known by the Guardian and Chapter Council and the Member will, when asked, describe their ministry to the Community during the annual Chapter. The Chapter Council may conduct a survey of the various ministries that are within the Community. This survey would be used to describe to the Bishop Visitor the activities of the Community. Members must take care that the mission is conducted in a humble, loving, and respectful manner.

III - Section 8. Reconciliation

Each Member is to work for peace and justice in their local community and throughout creation. This ministry is a component of all the other ministries in which the Members are engaged. We are inspired by Francis and Clare who wished "Peace" to all they met. The Community is encouraged to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a spiritual practice.

III - Section 9. Formation

A. Inquirers

Inquirers will be assisted in their discernment process of the religious life as defined by the Community. There will be a formal application process that will include an application, background check, and other inquiry as necessary.

B. Applicants

Applicants will be interviewed (preferably face-to-face or online) by at least two professed Members and the Guardian. The three interviewers will decide if the Applicant should become a Candidate. The interviews can be done as a group or individually. Once received, Candidates begin their mutual discernment and study with the Community.

C. Stages of Formation

The stages of formation are designed to grow and deepen the Member's response to God's love, discernment of a Franciscan vocation, understanding of the vows, development of personal and communal prayer life, participation and dynamics of living in a community, the establishment of a ministry, and faithfully living the Gospel. Being formed into Religious Life and being integrated into the Community is a discernment process requiring time and the development of relationships. The stages of formation will be:

i. Candidacy: Exploring beliefs - a focus of discerning Christian faith and vocation. At least three months.

ii. Postulancy: Growing Franciscan Roots - a focus of discerning a Franciscan vocation in the context of this Community, development of a prayer life that includes the Daily Office, an appreciation for the central prayer of the Eucharist, a basic understanding of the vows, and introduction to Franciscan history and spirituality. Postulancy is a time of integration and introduction into the Community.

iii. Novitiate: The Novice becomes a Member of the Community when they proclaim their novice promises to the Community. The novitiate is normally a two-year experience, with the first year being concerned with the vows and prayer, and the second year is concerned with the development of ministry and a contemporary living of the vows. However, timelines are meant to be flexible. Clothing of novices into the habit is an action taken by the entire Community and normally done at the annual Chapter.

iv. Profession: Profession of vows affirms the commitment to a continuous formation that affirms prayer, ministry, community, and study of sacred Scripture. Professed vows are taken before the entire Community at the annual Chapter unless extreme circumstances require otherwise.

Members may also choose, after three or more years of Profession, to take a special formation program designed to reflect on the permanence of their vows. At the end of this program the Member may reaffirm their vows at the chapter, though there is not a change in the status of being Professed.

D. Formation Process

Every member of the community is to be actively involved in the formation process which includes a response and dialogue between the individual member and a Formation Companion and participation in electronic gatherings. The formation process is both reflective (inward) and relational (communal). Candidates and Postulants are involved in the determined program for their formation and the designated Formation Companion for their stage. Novices participate in the novitiate program of formation. Professed Members continue their formation throughout their lifetime.

E. Formation Exercises

Exercises are developed to include a brief meditation on the topic, a scriptural reference, and reflective responses to the topic. The Member must also indicate how the lesson has been implemented in their lives either/or in a transformative personal way or in their ministry. Formation exercises will be determined by the

Formation Director, with the consent of the Community, and the Formation Companion will give feedback on the response. A virtual gathering to discuss the formation exercise may be included.

F. Clusters

Members will develop clusters that encourage dialogue among Members. Regional clusters may also be formed. Various topics of common interest are encouraged to be discussed. The purpose of forming a cluster is to create more communication and shared learning among the Members of the Community. The activity of the clusters is in addition to the Chapter cluster meetings and formation clusters.

G. Participation in Formation

Formation requires continuous effort and active participation. Formation has a focus on living according to the Gospel, which transforms our lives, whereas study, which Members are encouraged to do, has a focus on gaining knowledge to inform our lives.

H. Pastoral Accommodation to Formation

The formation process may be modified to accommodate individual needs. These modifications may include the transition from one state to another, the format and responses of the exercises, length of time in various stages, development of other stages, and the process of integration into the Community. Above all, the process of formation is to be helpful for the member to grow in living the Gospel life. Accommodations are made to assist in that growth and will be developed by the Formation Companion with the approval of the Guardian and Chapter Council. Accommodations are to be transparent if at all possible.

I. Transitions

Normally, all transitions in formation will occur at the annual Chapter. Any exceptions to this must be reviewed and approved by the Guardian and Chapter Council. Should a member transition from one stage to another outside of the annual Chapter the entire Community is to be informed prior to the transition with reasons given for the transition, and opportunity for input to be received. The Chapter Council will make all decisions concerning transitions.

J. Membership

Any Member in professed vows is a full member of the Community with voice and voting rights. Novices are members of the Community, with voice but do not have the right to vote. Candidates and Postulants are inquirers to the Community and have a voice in the discussion, though not in the deliberations of a decision or a right to vote.

K. Reception of Members from other Religious Communities

Inquirers from other religious communities will meet with the Guardian and Councilors assigned by Chapter Council so that an appropriate path of formation can be developed. The way forward for Religious from other communities will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will always include a period of discernment and formation. Profession will only be permitted once the Guardian and Chapter Council are in consensus.

III - Section 10. Vows

Vows are professed to God and are witnessed by the gathered Community at the annual Chapter. On the rare occasion that vows are not given at the annual Chapter, then the Guardian will appoint at least two professed members to witness the vows that are given. Novices begin the Novitiate and become members of the Community when they state their promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Novice promises must be renewed each year of the Novitiate. When the Novice successfully completes the Novitiate, they are able to profess vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience at the next annual Chapter. Any Professed Member may renew their vows at the annual Chapter, though this is not a requirement to remain in the vowed state.

III - Section 11. Active Participation

A. Chapter

The annual Chapter will be held each year to gather the Community in prayer, reflection, rest, companionship, and appreciation. During the annual Chapter the Eucharist will be the central prayer of the Community. In terms of formation all passages from one stage to another (Candidate to Postulant, Postulant to Novice, Novice to Professed) will generally take place at the annual Chapter. Postulants becoming Novices will state their promises before the Community and be clothed in the habit at the annual Chapter. The Professed Members may also renew their profession at the annual Chapter if so desired. The business of the Community will be conducted at the annual Chapter.

B. Various Expressions

Members of the Community may live their vocations in a variety of ways. Generally, the Community is dispersed. However, intentional communities may be developed. Contemplative lifestyles may also be developed. Other expressions of our vocation may be developed that are in the spirit of our *Rule and Journey of Life*.

C. Communication

Members of the Community are expected to be in regular communication (personal, electronic, written) with other members of the Community, especially their Formation Companion. Members are to respond in a timely manner to communications from the Guardian or Councilors.

D. Retreat

All Members should attend retreats (personal, parish, community, etc.) every year.

E. Spiritual Companion/Director

All Members should participate in, and be accountable for, regular spiritual direction/companionship.

F. Annual Check-In

Members will share with the Chapter Council how their Franciscan life has impacted who God has called them to be and what God is calling them to do.

G. Pastoral Accommodation

The Guardian and Chapter Council will modify active participation in a pastoral manner for the benefit of Members who require accommodation.

III - Section 12. Habits and External Signs of Membership

The habit is an external sign of inward spirituality. The habit consists of a simple brown tunic with a white cord with three knots. A scapular or short capuche with hood is worn over the tunic. The cord knots are to be worn on the right side. The Professed will wear a metal San Damiano Cross in addition to the habit.

III - Section 13. Governance

We value consensus, cooperation, and dialogue. The Chapter Council will publish their deliberations, discussions, and decisions. The only exception to this transparency will be in matters of extreme sensitivity and personal in nature. The Chapter Council will also appoint a Treasurer and Secretary from among the Community. The Treasurer may serve longer than six years, but only at the discretion of the Chapter Council. The Chapter Council may appoint Members to serve in other roles as necessary. The Chapter Council may appoint "ad hoc" committees to complete specific work as needed.

A. Democratic Process

Our governance will be conducted in a democratic fashion. All major decisions will be decided in a democratic process decided by the Members (consensus, voting, acclamation).

B. Elections

Professed Members will be elected to serve on the Chapter Council. This service is given in the spirit of humility and minority. The Guardian will be the central leader of the Community. The Councilors will represent the Community at the Chapter Council meetings. Terms of office are three years with the possibility of being elected for another three-year term. No Member may serve in one position for more than six years except for the Treasurer. The Treasurer serves at the discretion of the Chapter Council. A Secretary may be appointed by Chapter Council to take minutes at meetings and other duties as assigned.

C. Guardian

The Guardian will be called by a simple majority vote of the Professed Members. The Guardian will discern with the Chapter Council in all decisions. The Guardian is a servant and pastoral leader who along with the Chapter Council facilitates the welfare of the Members of the Community as they live the Gospel life. The Guardian may serve as the “tie-breaker” if a vote is taken by the Chapter Council. The Guardian serves the Community with humility and appreciation. The Guardian will communicate various reports to the Bishop Visitor. The Guardian will send out general messages of encouragement, support, and information to the Community. The Guardian, or a designee, will preside and facilitate all meetings of the Community.

D. Councilors

Councilors are elected by a confidential vote of the Professed. The Councilors are to serve the Community by implementing the decisions made at the annual Chapter and conducting the day-to-day business of the Community throughout the year. Every Member of the Community has access to the Chapter Council through their elected Councilors. The Chapter Council will appoint a Treasurer and Secretary and may delegate other duties.

E. Directors

The Chapter Council will appoint various Directors (formation, ministry, liturgy, etc.) from among the Professed Members of the community. The Directors will serve the Community in the area of their appointment and take guidance and direction from the Chapter Council.

F. Reports by the Chapter Council

The Chapter Council will produce an Annual Report containing the formation status, ministry, financial health, and transitions of each Member of the Community. This report will be submitted to the Bishop Visitor. This report will also be used to assess the general status and health of the Community. Trends will be studied. A survey will also be given to each member about their perceptions and concerns regarding membership in the Community. These surveys will be used to continuously improve the formation, ministry, and life within the Community.

G. Incorporation

The Community of Francis and Clare is a domestic nonprofit corporation incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on August 9, 2019. The Community will comply with all applicable laws governing domestic nonprofit corporations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and file all required annual reports and fees. The corporate structure of the Community is defined by the *Constitution and Bylaws of the Community of Francis and Clare* that was adopted by the Board of Trustees on July 27, 2019. The Chapter Council serves as the Board of Trustees with the Guardian serving as Chair.

H. Charitable Status

The Community of Francis and Clare is a tax-exempt non-profit corporation as defined by Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code effective October 2, 2019. The Community will remain compliant with all requirements to retain tax-exempt status.

I. Insurance

The Community will at all times carry adequate and appropriate liability insurance. Coverage will be reviewed annually.

J. Personal Responsibility

Each Member is personally responsible for their actions, finances, obligations, and liabilities.

K. Finance

The financial resources of the Community will be managed by the Chapter Council by delegation to the Treasurer. An annual report is to be made to all Members, which will include the annual budget and actual and anticipated revenues and expenses. All expenses will be approved by the Chapter Council.

L. Property

The Community will not own or hold real property. In the event that the Community should dissolve, any financial assets remaining will be donated to a suitable nonprofit such as Episcopal Relief and Development in accordance with the laws governing nonprofit (religious) organizations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

M. Ecumenical Franciscan Groups

The Community may establish ecumenical communication with other Franciscan groups (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, etc.) so that the richness of our shared tradition might strengthen, encourage, and challenge us to live the Gospel more fully.

III - Section 14. Release

A. Passive Dismissal

Passive dismissal results from the inactivity of any Member who, by their inactivity, has withdrawn from the Community's ministry, formation, and engagement with other Members, without prior dispensation granted by the Guardian. Prior to being passively dismissed the Member is to be contacted by the Guardian, Formation Companion, or someone delegated by the Guardian. The process is to include listening, gentleness, and reconciliation. The passive Member is to know the consequences of inactivity and loss of membership in the Community. The Bishop Visitor, the Member's Bishop Diocesan, and/or Rector are to be informed.

B. Dismissal with Cause

Members can be dismissed from the Community if they have given enough cause by violating the Rule, Constitution, Safe Church policies, or other grievous actions as determined by the Chapter Council. The Member's Bishop Diocesan and/or Rector are to be informed of the violations and consequent actions of dismissal. The Member does have the right to appeal to the Bishop Visitor. The Member may be placed on a Leave of Absence from the Community at any stage of this process.

C. Removal of the Guardian or Chapter Councilors

Any elected leader, including, but not limited to, the Guardian and Councilors, may be removed from office for not performing their duties. This removal will be done by a vote by the Professed Members after the behavior of the leader has been examined by the remaining Councilors of Chapter Council. The Bishop Visitor is to be informed. The Member has the right to appeal.

D. Request to leave the Community

A Member may request to leave the Community should they discern that their membership is no longer reflective of their vocation. Blessings will be exchanged. The Bishop Visitor, the Member's Bishop Diocesan, and/or Rector are to be informed.

E. Death of a Member

When a Member dies the Guardian or a Chapter Councilor will inform the entire Community, the Bishop Visitor, and the Member's Bishop Diocesan and/or Rector. A period of prayer and reflection will be given to honor the Member. If possible, other Members of the Community will attend the funeral or memorial services and extend to the family the sympathy and prayers of the Community. At the next annual Chapter, the names of the deceased Members will be recited and prayers will be offered.

F. Death or Vacancy of Guardian or Chapter Councilor

If the Guardian dies, becomes incapacitated, or resigns, the Chapter Council will designate an Interim Guardian from among the Chapter Councilors to serve until the next annual Chapter. If a Councilor dies, becomes otherwise incapacitated, or resigns, the Chapter Council will designate an interim Councilor. The entire Community, including the Bishop Visitor will be informed of these appointments.

III - Section 15. Bishop Visitor

The Chapter Council will develop the process to select the Bishop Visitor who will be elected by a majority vote of the Professed Members. The Bishop Visitor may serve a term of up to three years. The Bishop Visitor may be re-elected for other terms at the conclusion of the first term. If the Bishop Visitor position becomes vacant before the end of the term, the process of selection will begin again. The Bishop Visitor will be the guardian of the Rule and Constitution of the Community and serve as an arbiter in matters that the Community or its members cannot resolve through its normal process. Any Professed member may petition the Bishop Visitor for dispensation of their commitment after having gone through the normal process within the Community without being satisfied with the result. If the petitioner is not satisfied with the ruling of the Bishop Visitor, the Professed member may file a petition with the Presiding Bishop, who shall appoint a Board of three Bishops to review the petition and the decision made by the Bishop Visitor and make a recommendation to the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, who shall make a final decision. The Bishop Visitor will receive reports from the Chapter Council about the ministerial activities, formation stages and transitions within the community, and compliance with Safe Church training or its equivalent. The Bishop Visitor will be invited to attend the annual Chapter of the Community.

III - Section 16. Ethical Conduct

Adherence to Safe Church policies is mandatory for all members of the Community. Each Member is to attend the appropriate Diocesan or parish workshops or programs that pertain to the ethical and respectful treatment of all people. Each Member is required to provide documentation of their attendance and must remain current in required certifications and knowledge. No Member can engage in any ministry, or represent the Community in any way if they are not current with Safe Church training. A Member may be dismissed or put on a leave of absence if they are not current with these policies. A Councilor of Chapter Council will be appointed to monitor compliance of Members with this policy, and Members will be asked to complete and sign a document covering all areas of ethical conduct.

III - Section 17. Values

We strive to be a community that is more of a movement than an institution. To keep our spirits fresh, we will continually find ways to improve, deepen, encourage, and develop our love of God and our neighbor. There is always a stranger to make into a friend. As a community that values diversity, we challenge prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. Above all we strive to “respect the dignity of every human being.” (*cf. Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer, 1979*) We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, political or religious bigotry, and any other belief system that demeans the dignity of any child of God. We further oppose any discrimination based on economic status, social status, or class.

III - Section 18. Rule, Guidelines, and Customs

The creative tension between living ancient truths in contemporary ways will always be a hallmark of our Community. It is our hope that we have created a *Rule and Journey of Life* that is grounded in Scripture. Our charism is drawn from the lives of Francis and Clare, the Franciscan movement, and based on our experience. We hope that we have expressed these “ancient truths.” It is also our hope that our Rule, Guidelines, and Customs will be the place where contemporary expression is kept fluid, relevant, effective, and most loving.

A. The Sacred Rule

The role of the Sacred Rule is to be the reference point for all deliberations, decisions, interactions, growth, speculation, inspiration, etc. When pondering the next steps, the Sacred Rule will ask the ultimate question of, “How does this lead me or us to love God and neighbor?” The answer should be clear. It is the hope that this lens will bring into focus everything about our community.

B. Other Documents, Policies, or Procedures

In addition to the Constitution and Bylaws, other documents, policies, and/or procedures may be developed for the good of the Community and to remain in compliance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the legal requirements of the Articles of Incorporation, and charitable status.