



# La Verna E-Vision

*Be the Bridge to Fraternal life*  
REC Chapter of Elections edition.

## The La Verna Regional Executive Council Chapter of Elections

June 28-30, 2024

St. Anthony Retreat Center

Marathon, WI

John Abendroth, OFS, will be our election President,  
Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv., will be the Friar Witness

***\*Amended Edition\****

### *A Prayer for Vocations to the Secular Franciscan Order~*

*Almighty, eternal just and merciful God:  
Leadership is hard to define.  
Lord, let us be the ones to define it with justice.  
Leadership is like a handful of water.  
Lord, let us be the people to share with those who thirst.  
Leadership is not about watching and correcting.  
Lord, let us remember it is about listening and connecting.  
Leadership is not about telling people what to do.  
Lord, let us first find out what people want.  
Leadership is less about the love of power and more about the power of love.  
Lord, as we continue to undertake the role of leader let us be affirmed by the servant leadership we witness in your son Jesus.  
Let us walk in the path He has set and let those who will, follow.  
Let our greatest passion be...compassion.  
Our greatest strength...love.  
Our greatest victory...the reward of peace.  
In leading, let us never fail to follow. In loving, let us never fail. Amen.*



## A Message from Our Minister~

My brothers and sisters in St. Francis.

Welcome to the latest edition of the La Verna E-Vision. We hope to provide updates on our shared journey of embracing the Franciscan charism in our everyday lives and the exciting happenings in the La Verna Region.

We just completed our 2024 District Retreat & Gathering on April 13 (Wausau) and May 4 (Milwaukee). St. James Fraternity in Wausau and Saint Francis of Assisi Fraternity in Milwaukee were warm and hospitable hosts whose attention to detail made the day flow beautifully. This year's theme was Transforming Ourselves to Love: Article 19 of OFS Rule. The format was a bit different, with the morning session focusing on a retreat led by Br. Jerome Schroeder, OFM Cap. With a focus on Article 19, Br. Jerome helped us to trust in the presence of the divine seed in everyone by first listening in silence to the Holy Spirit and then listening with our whole heart and mind to our sisters and brothers. The retreat ended with a Renewal of Commitment to our Profession. One attendee said, "Morning retreat was hugely successful. Gave us time to share and learn from one another. Beautiful way of bringing us together and giving us windows to the beautiful charisms of each other."

The afternoon session was typical of previous District Gatherings: a Q&A with members of the Regional Executive Committee, a large group share-out from the morning session and a presentation from the hosting fraternity. At the Wausau gathering we learned about the Hagar House, a faith-based nonprofit committed to providing support to single mothers in the greater Wausau area. In Milwaukee, our Regional Formation Director, Sue Bashynski, OFS kindled the flames of fraternity, faith, and service with her Connection to God talk. Another attendee said, "I liked it all. It was a good time for self-introspection. Looking back at my profession gave me a renewed spirit to keep carrying on. Thank you for the day. The food was excellent!"

Our 2024 Chapter of Elections will take place June 28-30 at St Anthony Spirituality Center. The National Presider of the elections will be John Abendroth, OFS, the Vice Minister of the Queen of Peace Region. The Queen of Peace Region covers local fraternities in the areas of Minnesota, Western Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, and North and South Dakota. The National Ecclesiastical Witness will be Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv. Fr. Marek is originally from Poland and is currently a member of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. He previously has been a missionary to Kenya and Tanzania and also served as Vocation Director, Retreat Director, Postulant Director, and Parish Priest.

I have served on the Regional Executive Committee (REC) for the past 13 years (6 years as Vice Minister and 7 years as Minister). During my time on the REC I tried to instill a philosophy of servant leadership; my goal was never to be dictatorial nor put myself forward. I strived to be collaborative, seeking to exalt the gifts of my brothers and sisters. I'm sure I felt short at times, but my hope was to serve my Franciscan community humbly. As a servant leader, I support and encourage the growth and development of my fellow Franciscan brothers and sisters, helping them to reach their full potential. Our current challenges bring opportunities for others to serve our wonderful Order with a deep commitment and enthusiasm. Are you ready to take on a leadership role and bring fresh perspectives and energy to the La Verna Region? Please consider running for one of the positions on the REC. We need YOU, a selfless model of following our Franciscan Rule.

As we walk in the footsteps of St. Francis, let us be inspired by his radical love for all creation, his unwavering commitment to peace, and his profound humility. Together, let us strive to live out the Gospel values, seeking to be instruments of God's peace in a world often troubled by division and strife. Let us continue to support and uplift one another as we journey together on the path of Franciscan spirituality.

Peace and Joy!

Jeff Gumz, OFS  
Minister of the La Verna Region

## FRANCISCAN SPIRIT PROVIDES SERVICE

The essence of service within Franciscan life is action coming from love. Our feeling of self-worth grows as we give service to our fraternity brothers and sisters. Each Secular Franciscan biography listed in this edition voices a wide landscape of personal, family, career, and OFS lived experiences.

By uniting at the regional fraternal level, the newly- elected council members will begin to vision together program ideas and create new pathways referenced from our Rule and the Gospel well-being that support Secular Franciscans, the Franciscan Family, and the community.

Please review the individual biographies of your brothers and sisters who wish to run for a council position on the La Verna Regional council. Thank you.

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### BIOGRAPHIES

Biographies of each nominee for REC positions are as follows:

#### *For the position of La Verna Regional Minister:*

**Sharon Dale**, Our Lady Queen of Heaven Fraternity, Wisconsin Rapids



I have been blessed in my Franciscan journey. Throughout my 27 years as a professed Secular, I've had the privilege of serving my local fraternity as Minister, Vice-Minister, Treasurer and Secretary. While on our Council I wrote our fraternity history as well as established a fraternity library.

At the regional level I've served 2 terms as councilor and am finishing my first term as Vice-Minister. As Councilor I've presided at local fraternity elections and several fraternity visitations. What a wonderful opportunity this was to meet members of our Franciscan family. I've given talks and Power Point

presentations at District Gatherings as well as annual Chapters.

During these past years I've also served as Regional Archivist. As such, I've created a digitalized system wherein all of our older regional documents are stored safely and securely at St.

Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon. With the help of others, we compiled the LaVerna Region history.

As Vice-Minister of our region, I was appointed the JPIC Coordinator. In this position I pass on any JPIC information that comes from the National Commission. I write a monthly article which is sent to our local JPIC fraternity contacts. These monthly articles, which focus on issues related to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, are then forwarded to all fraternity members.

I've had the privilege of attending several National Chapters and have participated in three Quinquennial (national conventions held basically every 5 years). This last Quinquennial, held in Phoenix, Az., featured a history museum which the national historian and me assembled with documents and displays highlighting 100 years of the SFO in the US.

I take my responsibilities as a servant-leader seriously. I hope to continue using the God-given gifts of organizational skills and enthusiasm to work toward this vision for the future of our LaVerna Region. As your region minister I hope, with the grace of God, to continue this ministry of service and action. This is what characterizes my life as a Secular Franciscan.

Sharon Dale OFS

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***For the position of La Verna Regional Vice Minister:***

**Art Montgomery**, St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Milwaukee



I want to thank the search committee members for their service to the region and to those who will vote in the upcoming elections. I hold you in prayer during your discernment process. I was professed in 2007 into the Portiuncula fraternity in Franklin, WI, and currently am a member of the St. Francis of Assisi fraternity in Milwaukee, WI. I currently serve as Minister for our fraternity, and have served as secretary, treasurer, vice-minister, and formation director in the past. My home parish is St. Jude

the Apostle in Wauwatosa, WI where I served on the pastoral council, including a term as council president, and served in multiple roles with the human concerns committee. Past involvement includes 15 years in leadership with the scout troop. For the past six years I've taught science at St. Joan Antida Catholic high school which serves girls from lower socio-economic areas of the city.

I would like to enter my name for consideration of two REC positions: 1. Vice Minister; 2. Councilor

**Charlie R. Neuman**, St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Milwaukee



I'm the third of three children. I was born and raised in Two Rivers, WI. My occupations are vast and varied as; Assistant manager of produce, Government Documents Librarian, Teacher, DRE, Floral Design Artist, Group Home Parent, Director of Head Start, Coordinator, Handicap Program for SDC, My educational background is Social Work/Sociology, Religious Studies, Art Education, Early Childhood Education, and Special Education. I was professed in April 2014. I have served as, secretary, vice-minister and minister for Saint Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Milwaukee, WI. It has been an honor and privilege to serve as a REC Councilor

from. 2021-2024. The Fraternities I'm Councilor to are St. Ann of Green Bay, St. Francis/St. Claire of Madison, Holy Innocents of Manitowoc, Sacred Heart of Oshkosh, Our Lady Queen of Heaven Wisconsin Rapids. I willingly accept the invitation to serve. I feel, this is another way/ step to help St Francis of Assisi to rebuild the church.

I would like to enter my name for consideration of two REC positions: 1. Vice-Minister; 2. Councilor

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*There are currently no nominations for the position of Secretary*

*Thank you to Kathy Sutliff for your many years of service as Secretary to the LaVerna Region Regional Executive Council. You will be missed!*

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***For the position of LaVerna Regional Treasurer:***

**Bob Henning, St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Marquette, MI**



I was born and raised in Chicago. I served in the US Army for over 21 years. I have been married to Mary Jane for over 54 years and we have 3 children, 21 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. I currently manage a calibration laboratory and we live in Marquette, MI.

I have taught and been involved in different religious education programs for over 30 years. We attended our first Marriage Encounter weekend in 1976 in Germany and eventually became a Team Couple and presented talks at M.E. weekends.

We served on the Liturgical Planning Committee for St. Louis the King parish when the new church was being planned. We are currently members of the St. Louis The King Parish in Harvey, MI. In 1996 I became a professed Secular Franciscan and have been deeply involved with the Secular Franciscan Order both at the local and regional levels. I am currently the Formation Director of the St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity in Marquette, MI. and the Treasurer of the La Verna Region. I am willing to serve in a servant leadership position if elected.

Additionally, Bob is open to being nominated for the Secretary or Councilor positions

**Pam Kaskin, Sacred Heart Fraternity, Oshkosh**



I was professed to the OFS in February 2013 as a member of Sacred Heart Fraternity in Oshkosh. Since that time I have served two terms on our local council as Treasurer and found this to be a great way to learn more about the OFS and our own fraternity!

I grew up in Southeast Wisconsin and graduated from UW-LaCrosse where I majored in Accounting. After working for eight years in Milwaukee, I was transferred to Oshkosh which I have called home for over 30 years.

I am currently a member of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Oshkosh where I am a cantor and member of the vocal choir. I also sing with the Diocesan Chorale for the Green Bay Diocese which provides a wonderful opportunity to witness the beauty of Ordination Masses and the Chrism Mass. I also volunteer once a week at Ascension-Mercy here in Oshkosh. Since I retired from full-time employment in December 2019 (after 38 years with the same employer), I welcome these opportunities to share time and talents with both my church community and the community-at-large.

Since I'm single with no children, I have my "furbaby" – i.e. my cat Teenie – to keep me company and entertained at home! In my spare time, I enjoy doing counted cross stitch which I like to give away to family and friends who are always very appreciative! You may also see me in the box office at The Grand Oshkosh where I work part-time. This is a perfect fit for me as I have always enjoyed the performing arts and have even performed on The Grand's stage in the past. Conversations with our patrons are just the best!

As we near the upcoming elections, I have given much thought to the nominations of Regional Councilor and Treasurer for the LaVerna Region. While I feel like I still have much to learn on my personal journey, I would welcome the opportunity to serve OFS members of the LaVerna Region in either of these positions if I'm elected.

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***For the position of LaVerna Regional Councilor:***

**Roxanne Miner, St. Ann Fraternity, Green Bay**



Although I have only been professed since 2018, I feel that I have lived out the Franciscan charism my entire life.

I was born and raised in South Dakota, have been married to Patrick (also a Secular Franciscan) for 49 years, raised our 8 children in Davenport, Iowa, taught theology at a Catholic High School for 30 years before discerning a call to be a hospital chaplain. Patrick and I belonged to the Pope St. John XXIII fraternity in the Quad Cities (Rock Island, Illinois) before moving to Wisconsin in 2019.

I am a board-certified chaplain with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, currently serving as the Director of Mission and Pastoral Care at Holy Family Memorial Hospital in Manitowoc. The hospital was founded by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, and I am so blessed to be able to share in the same Franciscan values that my hospital embraces, particularly in caring for the poor and vulnerable.

Patrick and I joined the St. Ann Fraternity in Green Bay in 2021. Shortly after, I was elected as formation minister for that fraternity and councilor for the LaVerna region. As councilor, I have enjoyed building relationships with the other members of the REC, as well as with the members of the fraternities I serve as councilor.

I am very honored to have been able to serve as regional councilor the past three years. I look forward to continued opportunities to provide leadership for the LaVerna region. I believe the Holy Spirit is moving the Church and the world in new directions and I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead as we continue to rebuild the church together.

**Nora Kessel, St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Marquette, MI**



I truly felt like I finally found my faith path when I was professed on October 12th, 2013. I get teary just thinking of that chilly fall day as my fraternity surrounded me. Currently, I am honored to be Minister of the St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity in Marquette. My fraternity has taught me more about living life as a Franciscan than I can explain.

I'm also active in my community and my church, St. Christopher's in Marquette. I have a deep love for young moms, the homeless, the elderly and disabled. It is in serving them that I feel closest to Our Lord. My husband of 40 years is always by my side and our three children, though living far away are our life

well, right after our grandson, Charlie. I'm a retired nurse and currently manage an office for a non-profit agency that serves the elderly and disabled at or near the poverty line.

I learned a lot in my first term as Councilor and I continue to feel the Holy Spirit nudging me to do more for our fraternity and our Region. So here I am.... humbly praying that if elected, all my actions follow the footsteps of St. Francis and my words give all glory to God.

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LA VERNA - OFS - REGION

## **Chapter Agenda:**

### **Friday:**

- 3 - 5:00 PM Registration and welcoming Regional Fraternity Ministers and all others
- 5:30 PM Supper
- 6:30 Welcoming message by St. Anthony staff person and explanation of the Chapter of Elections by Jeff Gumz (Conference Rm)
- Introduce John Abendroth, OFS and Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv.
- 7:15 PM Prayer service in Chapel
- 7:45 PM Social in the Fr. Peter Hesse Room

### **Saturday:**

- 8:00 AM Breakfast
- 8:45 AM Memorial Prayer Service in the Chapel
- 9:30 AM Opening of Chapter- Jeff Gumz, OFS (Conference Rm.)
  - Welcome our NAFRA/CNSA visitors who will witness our elections.
  - Setting the tone- Br. Jerome Schroeder, OFM Cap
- 10:00 AM Business meeting
  - Roll Call
  - Approval of Minutes from July 21 - July 23, 2023
  - Financial Report
  - Approval of 2024-25 Budget (Revised budget and end of year report)
  - Approve amendments to Regional Guidelines
  - Regional Minister's Report
  - Regional Vice Minister report
  - Report from our regional Spiritual Assistants- Br. Jerome Schroeder, OFM Cap/Janet Dubec, OFS
  - Reports from other REC members
- 10:30 AM Break
- 10:45 AM Continue with Regional Fraternity Business Meeting
- 11:45 AM Gather for picture on front steps of St. Anthony's
- 12 noon Lunch
- 12:30 – 1:30 PM St Anthony Gift Shop will be open/take a walk or a nap.
- 1:30 PM Opening of Chapter of Elections with NAFRA/CNSA Appointed Representatives
- Break after
- 4:00 PM Sunday Liturgy – Installation of newly elected council (or as designated by NAFRA/CNSA reps)
- 5:30 PM Supper
- 7:00 PM Prayer service for refugees/immigrants/war
- 7:30 PM Social - celebrating our newly elected council.  
(Time to spend in conversation with new and old friends.)

### **Sunday:**

- 8:00 AM Breakfast
- 8:45 AM Prayer service in the Chapel
- 9:30 AM Gathering of all. Local ministers will share their fraternity's five best practices. (Reports must be written and verbally shared, not more than 3 minutes for each to speak.) These reports are compiled and shared with all fraternities for ideas for other fraternities to use (Conference room).
- Closing of Chapter prayer- NAFRA/CNSA representatives

- **Be sure to fill out the evaluation form before you Depart from St. Anthony's by 11:30 AM**

