

John Lovatt: Electoral address for Provincial Treasurer and Trustee of the European Province

The Order has given us guidelines for Electoral addresses so I'm going to be good and obey for once, so here goes:-

Relevant TSSF experience (with dates)

To my surprise invited by TO Provincial Chaplain to be Chapter Clerk in the late 70's when I composed some of our Profession Service. Since then I've tried but failed to be elected to anything (Minister Provincial (twice!), Prov. Treasurer last time, Link Tertiary...), so I volunteered for or was appointed to the following!

TO representative at the World Congress of Secular Franciscans (Roman Catholic) in 1973 & 1983. Deputy Regional Guardian for the old North Mercia Region 1996-8, and attended Provincial Chapter in March 1999, and was on one of the working parties, and so participated in the restructuring of the Order. Convenor of North Staffs Area 1996-2002. Mercia Area Minister 2002-2008. Mercia Secretary & Treasurer 2012-14. Mercia Area Minister 2014. I think my problem is I'm just an ordinary tertiary, not a Rev or a Canon or important person, but also too passionate about Francis and want us to return to his vision – I think this frightens people.

Any 'specialist qualifications'

Not an accountant, but qualified as a computer programmer in the 1970s, and wrote all the accounts software for the family company then installed the Sage accounting system. OK as a book-keeper - Treasurer of the charities Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE) and ICF (Industrial Christian Fellowship). Familiar with Charity Law for charity treasurers; consulted with the Charity Commission, who were most helpful! Prepared Gift Aid submissions for CABE and ICF. Familiar with data protection regulations.

I suppose my best qualification is being Managing Director of the family business which employed 350 people, turnover £6m, so had to understand accounts, and manage finances, talk to banks, raise finance, help it through difficult times. We sold out in 2000, and now I just run a small company building factories in the Developing World and prepare all its annual accounts and submit them to Companies House and HMRC, and produce all the budgets, cashflows and business models for the various projects. So I can bring a lot of experience (of failure as well as success!), made many mistakes, but did turn round failing companies (TSSF have some financial problems at the moment, I hope to help).

How I propose to undertake the job

Although the present system seems very efficient, I would propose to review the systems to simplify further. I also would try to make the finances more transparent and easy to understand. I hope to support and encourage the changes Chapter may desire, rather than be a traditionally pessimistic treasurer! and be creative in finding ways to balance the books! I would like to visit or at least phone Area Treasurers to explore how I can make their job easier. I would try to bring the finances back into credit by reviewing all our expenses and working with everyone to see how we can economise. I hope to find a gentle and simple way to help those who don't contribute at all to help our finances. Hope to bring the 'Jongleur de Dieu' spirit and be informal and silly, even though dealing with actually quite serious things.

Short personal description of the background, family and any particular motives that the individual seeks to bring to bear in the role.

My wife and I were professed together, Anglican family, passionate about Francis, and sad that the Order seems to have lost its way to some extent. Worried about the emphasis on rule-keeping and discipline of the Order rather than lifestyle, but if elected will probably find out all is well and we are all lovely people just wanting to follow Christ in the way of St Francis.

