

THIRD ORDER, SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS European Province

Provincial Communications Coordinator (PCC) - a personal note

Two calls for nominations have failed to produce any Tertiary who feels able to take on this office. Clearly we need to think more about the demands of the role. The next **PCC** could appoint an assistant to take on some tasks (e.g. organizing Comms Team meetings). We could look at other ways of doing the things that need to be done which are, above all, about **TSSF** as a scattered community.

Here I offer a personal note about the office, which I am relinquishing for personal reasons. I would emphasize that I have found the job extremely rewarding and have found serving on Provincial Chapter to be a privilege and a joy. As a member of a dedicated Communications Team I have found plenty to do and fellow-Tertiaries who have done much of the hard work have been encouraging, supportive and delightful to work with.

Dare I try and sum up what I have brought to the job?

- Facility with email communication (essential)
- Willingness to make decisions (with support and encouragement)
- Ability to delegate and share tasks (useful - and not something I do well)
- Fussy attention to detail (maybe more a hindrance than a help)
- Some experience with web page setting up and editing (**not** needed)

There are three strands to the job: work as a member of **Provincial Chapter**, work as convenor of the **Communications Team** and **day-to-day work** with members of the Team and with Tertiaries throughout the Province (and beyond).

Provincial Chapter: This meets three times a year, at the Diocesan Retreat House in Ely, and accommodation is arranged by the Provincial Secretary for one or two nights. The cost of this and of travel is paid for by the Order. The normal pattern is, in February and June a 25-hour meeting from Friday lunch to Saturday lunch and I have been able to attend from Newcastle upon Tyne with 36 hours away from home. In October Chapter occupies 49 hours, Friday to Sunday lunch and we are joined by SSF Ministers Provincial, the Abbess of the Community of St Clare and, sometimes, the Bishop Protector. These meetings are hard work and stimulating with an atmosphere that is friendly and relaxed.

The PCC presents a report, which I have always regarded as a report from the Communications Team. This may have matters for Chapter decision and matters of report to Chapter; often with pleas to be passed on to Areas by Link Tertiaries about communications issues like keeping track of Tertiaries moving Areas. The challenge is to make the report clear and concise.

Communications Team: This meets 3 times a year, at a place which is convenient for the Team - it has met at the CSF house in Southwark, at Freeland (with the possibility of staying overnight) and elsewhere (e.g. Birmingham). The date and choice of venue is negotiated with the Team and I have made the arrangements or asked someone in the Team to do this. I prepare an agenda, in consultation, and am responsible for the Team's report to Chapter.

The members of the Team are the Editors of TON and "Little Portion" (which has its own Editorial Team), the Membership Secretary, the Provincial Treasurer (as

the Team Budget is a large part of TSSF spending) and representatives of the Provincial Disability Advice (PDA) Team, the Web Team and the Third Order Distribution (TOD) Team.

My job, as I see it, is to support these workers where necessary and to bring their concerns to Chapter. With TON, I send the Editor stuff from Chapter (it comes out a few weeks after each Chapter meeting) and then I see a draft before it is sent out and make any comments if I wish. With "Little Portion" I am a non-attending member of the Editorial Team (which meets twice a year). I liaise closely with the Membership Secretary and in theory we both receive all changes to the membership records from Areas and from individuals. We discuss better ways of doing some of the regular tasks, like preparing the Intercessions List for printing and for the web. I have been involved in setting up the PDA Team after the original Disability Advisor came to the end of her term of office. This should require less active involvement from the next PCC - it has hiccups but is starting to run well. The TOD Team is experienced and efficient (there is a constraint that it requires Tertiaries close to Freeland and so the maximum service of 6 years may not be realistic). The Web Team at present consists of two professional computer people who are new to TSSF, so I have acted as a third member of that Team. A new PCC could follow this pattern or look for an experienced Tertiary to work with the youngsters - to offer guidance on TSSF priorities, for example.

Day-to-Day Tasks:

- **Dealing with email** of all sorts. As I have a membership list (a spreadsheet) I can answer questions about whom to contact in Areas; the Membership Secretary does a lot of this - we operate in "belt and braces" fashion and hopefully people don't get ignored. It is not necessary to be checking email every day - I do most days. Only if email won't be checked for over a week is it worth thinking about telling people.
- **Web items** - this should be delegated (see note above about the web team). I do more than is necessary, to make sure the rest of the web team have time for the sort of thing I can't do! They are the computer professionals.
Regular web tasks: adding notices of deaths of Tertiaries and, if requested, obituaries; making sure Chapter Minutes go on the web (without confidential items); checking papers (e.g. Study & Prayer) or delegating this task (e.g. to the Study & Prayer network coordinator) and getting them put on the web.
Social media: The Order has a growing presence on Facebook and is starting to use Twitter. This is currently part of web team activity.

Tasks that I have undertaken which are **not** parts of the PCC role.

- **Returning Officer** to assist the Provincial Secretary by taking the burden of running elections from him. This is **completely separate from the PCC role** and is something Chapter has agreed that I may continue when off Chapter.
- With my love of attention to detail, I found myself on the **Governance Working Group** (now ended with the production of the Chapter Handbook).
- I also **check names** of Tertiaries against the membership records when they come to Chapter for Profession, Leave of Absence or Release from vows. This task need not be one for a PCC.

Chris Petrie, November 2014