



This is the first-ever annual review of the Province. We ask the Area Ministers and their teams to report yearly to Chapter, so it seems only right that Chapter should say what we have been doing and how we have responded to what you have told us. Please let us know how you find it. If you would like to follow anything up, do contact your Link Tertiary.

To promote inclusivity and openness, we now invite one or two 'guest Area Ministers' to share in Chapter meetings which has proved to be enormously valuable to both Chapter and visitors alike – if your Area would like an invitation, please let your Link Tertiary know.

### **Review of life around the Province**

Areas have indicated that they would like clarification on what form the Area Minister's report to their Link Tertiaries should take. Soundings are being taken and guidance will be given after June's Chapter, possibly including some 'core questions' to help standardise reports. AFGs, who are well placed to assess the value of the annual report format, will forward their reports to PFG.

Local group sizes and Area boundaries were causes for concern in some Clusters. After discussion, it was decided that Area Teams were best placed to judge whether it was better for neighbouring Areas and small groups within a Cluster to adjust their boundaries, so as to balance (or even absorb) small groups, and make travelling to meetings easier, as well as providing more tertiaries in a group to undertake team roles. Chapter wants to encourage Area Teams, where appropriate, to use their authority to manage their own affairs.

It was clear that some Area Teams are not aware of the content of the Area Team Handbook (ATH), or its content has been forgotten. Copies should be passed on to incoming Area Team Members. The ATH is available on the TSSF Web-site and in the process of being updated. Guidance has been developed to address problems which are common to Areas (such as absent tertiaries). It explains how to use existing policy, such as the 'four marks of profession'; these will be added to the ATH. You are invited to suggest improvements to the ATH as it is being revised.

A welcome/induction pack is to be compiled for new Area Team members and also for Chapter members, to help them understand better their role, and also assist in succession planning of one team member to another.

A leaflet on disability will go into the ATH shortly. The Novice training material produced last year by the Provincial Novice Guardian and the Formation Team, 'Guidance to Novice Guardians' was added to by a paper entitled 'Becoming a Novice Guardian' which was approved at the February 2016 Chapter. It is hoped that the new material for Postulants, produced last year, together with the guidance for NGs will help aspirants and postulants to discern their Franciscan vocation. All this new material will be reviewed at the end of the year.

Comment has been received on the large amount of information provided by Chapter. This is recognised as a challenge and so steps are being considered to prioritise information that is provided. This might take the form of a 'traffic light system', such as identifying those things that tertiaries must do; things they need to know and, lastly, things they may be interested in.

The new film 'Finding Saint Francis' had its premier showing in London in November 2015 at the National film Theatre. It is accompanied by a booklet of stories and reflections, available as a free 'download' and could be used for Lent groups or formation training. DVDs can be obtained on a sale or return basis for Area Days.

### **Report of Chapter for 2015**

In this section we report on how Provincial Chapter has been seeking to address the issues which Areas raised over the last year, or which were identified as being common across several Areas.

Several Areas reported difficulties finding office holders last year, and asked for training for those who were in post, particularly local group convenors. November's 'Forming Franciscan Communities' day in London was organised to begin meeting these needs. Similar events are now being planned in other Areas. In the past Novice material did not alert them to the commitments involved in profession. The Provincial Novice Guardian with the Formation

team therefore developed notes for aspirants and postulants, and the guidance for Novice Guardians was updated and simplified.

Some areas also reported a shortage of Spiritual Directors, so a second introductory weekend on accompaniment was held at Alnmouth in September.

Areas clearly recognise the blessing our older members bring, but can find it a challenge to keep in touch with those who are infirm. We plan to publish an Assisi booklet exploring the gifts and challenges of age, for individuals and the wider Order. It is said that our membership is ageing, but currently we have no details because we do not have information on our Tertiaries' ages. Chapter is seeking to build an age profile (using anonymous data) so that we can plan for change.

At the other end of the spectrum, some Areas have commented on the relatively small number of younger Tertiaries. Are we offering what younger adults need? An inter-provincial working group, including some of our own younger Tertiaries, is going to explore such questions. Chapter will also consider, with an open mind, the suggestion that people who are interested in the Order but not (yet) seeking the full commitment of profession, could become 'companions' or 'associates'.

During the year a number of Areas have had to address difficult safeguarding cases. There have been convictions of Tertiaries for sexual offences, though none involving the Order. These have been worrying and upsetting. We have now agreed that we can call on expert advice from Chelmsford Diocese's safeguarding team. We also aim to identify and recruit specialist help in the Province and we plan to develop support procedures which Areas can call on.

### Emerging priorities for Chapter

Plans have been made for the 2017 General Chapter convocation and announced on the website and in a letter to Area Ministers. We look forward to listening to your hopes for the Order and where God may be calling us. Meanwhile in response to the matters Areas raised most recently, and other issues on its plate, during 2016/17 Chapter will seek to:

- Develop a welcome and induction package for new Area Team members and Provincial Chapter post-holders;

- Raise awareness of the information available to help Area teams, including the Area Team Handbook and content.
- Produce the Assisi booklet on Ageing.
- Encourage Areas to participate in their 'formation', recognising discretion and creativity at their own Area level.
- Develop communications between Area Treasurers, the Provincial Treasurer and the Finance sub- Group to assist with and standardise financial management methods across the Province.

### Financial summary

Some very positive developments for TSSF finances have been made this last year. A review of our finance arrangements completed in early 2015 and priorities were agreed to improve our ways of doing business in the Province. It was decided to form a 'Finance Sub-Group', to support the Provincial Treasurer, and a new accounting software system was also selected, acquired, and set up. This allows better reporting and analysis, as well as allowing us to process our own Gift Aid claims to HMRC, which saves the Province money. The finance team have also set about developing our assistance to Area Treasurers and increasing our Gift Aid recovery. This will be helped by consulting Area Treasurers and we hope to convene two meetings, one in the North and one South, in the spring of 2016. This will help us manage our funds to support the Order and tertiaries can help by reviewing their individual giving and also Gift Aiding individual contributions where possible.

### Statistical summary

TSSF	Professed	Noviced	Postulants	Total
2014	1837	103	43	1940
2015	1799	112	46	1911

### During 2015:

Noviced	66
Elections to Profession	45
Releases	21
Withdrawals	6
Deaths notified	43

### Elections to Chapter - 2015 (percentage voted)

**Provincial Treasurer** 19% of eligible votes cast  
**Link; Central South Eng.** 36%. (55% extra time)  
**Link E. Midlands & Yorks.** one Nomination.

You are encouraged to respond via your LT with any thoughts on what you have read, or any suggestions to improve the form of this report.