

## **THE ROLE OF TSSF PROVINCIAL SECRETARY**

Tertiaries who have not had any dealings with Chapter, may not know what the Provincial Secretary's role involves. It sounds a bit 'dry and dusty'. Not so! As I approach the end of my 6 year term in office, I thought I should enlighten tertiaries into some of the different aspects of the role to encourage those who might be pondering whether it is something they might do to support the Third Order.

The Provincial Secretary organises the three Provincial Chapter meetings each year, which includes organising the venue, accommodation, Programme of events and Agenda. The latter is done with the approval of Chapter members and often involves the production of papers by office-holders, in advance of the Chapter meetings, so that proposals for new policies or ways forward can be offered and considered before debate.

In recent years I have sought to arrange more Programme time, to ease the pressure on the busy Agenda, and Chapter is about to embark on a major rethink about the way we conduct our Chapter business. This is intended to enable our Franciscan spirituality and discernment to play a much fuller role in the way we try to respond to our Rule.

There is a regular need to elect new members of Chapter and, in recent years, I have been helped enormously by our 'Returning Officer', who manages the nomination and election process for me. We also have a Chapter Minutes Secretary who records the activities and decisions of Chapter for me, and this allows me to participate much more fully in the discussion of agenda items. Chapter members are also Trustees of the TSSF charitable trust, which seeks to ensure that our funds are used responsibly and that, as a religious Order, we can satisfy the Charity Commission we are providing a public benefit. I am the contact for Charity Commission issues and, in concert with the Provincial Treasurer, the Finance sub-group and our Independent Examiners, we seek to ensure the annual report and accounts are submitted properly and on time.

Chapter has a very important role in ratifying the requests for election to Profession and also release from vows or leave of absence. A good deal of care and prayer is taken over the latter categories, so it is important that names and details are checked with the membership secretary to ensure it is done correctly. I help Chapter to produce our new Annual Review to the Province to tell you what Chapter have been doing, and I am also responsible for advising Chapter on matters of data protection so that personal information is safeguarded and used responsibly.

In summary, the Provincial Secretary is involved in many aspects of Chapter business in support of the Minister Provincial and Chapter members, which makes it a very satisfying and worthwhile way to serve the Third Order. I hope another tertiary will be encouraged to take over the role.

Howard McFadyen

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