

Section B

Finance Guidance for Area Treasurers

1. Introduction

The job of the Area Treasurer is an important one, but it need not be onerous or complicated. The following notes are to assist you and to understand what you have to do both for the Area and reporting to the Provincial Treasurer.

2. Bank Account

It is expected that Areas will have bank account in the name of: Third Order of St. Francis - name of Area. There should ideally be three signatories of which any two are needed to sign cheques. Banks are increasingly concerned to counter "money laundering" and this means you have to accept the apparent bureaucracy involved in setting up an account or to change the signatories.

It is well worth setting up your bank account to do 'online banking' and to reimburse Tertiaries by BACS payments rather than cheques particularly as these are less and less accepted. The Provincial Treasurer can assist with this if needed.

3. Cash Book records

3.1. Expenditure

Each Treasurer should keep records of what is spent and on what.

3.2. Income

This will come either from Provincial funds or from Tertiary collections at Area Days. A further category will be Area Retreats where you may be asked to collect both deposits and the balance to pay over to the Retreat House.

3.3. Cash Book

A simple columnar cash book makes it easy to put items under the headings which the Provincial Treasurer will want you to report on the financial year which ends on 31st May. A copy of the form and the headings are attached in an Appendix to Area Handbook.

The cash book should be closed at the end of the financial year and the balance carried forward into the next year should agree with the closing balance in your bank account. (See Annual Return example in Section D)

4. Rules on Expenditure

4.1. Area Day Expenses

Costs for room/hall hire will vary from Area to area due to geographical locations. There is likely to be little flexibility in the cost of venues and such costs need to be recognised. Every attempt should be made to keep these as modest as possible. The cost of speakers including travelling costs should be within the guided cost if reclaiming them from Provincial funds. This does not debar Areas from having speaker above this figure. This simply means they will need to 'self-fund' them.

- Proposed Guide £50 maximum

note: This does not include any donations collected for a speaker's charity which should have a Franciscan ethos to conform to TSSF objects. (See 5.2)

4.2. Area Team Expenses

General Area team expenses should be kept as low as possible. This means keeping such items as photocopying to a minimum and emailing wherever possible to cut down on postage costs.

It is also important that Area Team members are reimbursed for travel expenses and other expenses they incur in the course of their roles. This is to ensure that no one is put off being on the Area team because they cannot afford to subsidise the role. Area Team members who wish to donate their expenses back to TSSF may do so.

Note: the current mileage rate that can be claimed is 40p. (at October 2016)

4.3. Pastoral and Support to Tertiaries

In some Areas there is either a formal or informal structure of visiting and providing support to tertiaries in care homes or housebound and those in ill-health and this need is likely to grow. The cost of these visits in travelling costs can be considerable and it is essential that these costs are borne by TSSF and not by individual tertiaries.

4.4. Other Expenditure

4.5. Gifts for retiring officers from Area Funds

This is not appropriate. Bake them a cake instead!

4.6. Photocopying

This is currently a rising expense for Areas due to the decision to supply Areas with Novice Notes in a PDF for local printing as well as printing TON for some Tertiaries.

4.7. Donations to Charities

These cannot be made out of Area funds.

4.8. Claims for Area Expenses to Area Treasurers

Expenses are claimed on an expense form or expenses can be claimed by a suitable email. Required information should be: -

- The Expense
- The Date of Expense
- Reason/purpose of Expense
- Bank Details for payment if reimbursed by BACS.
- The PT can supply standard expense claim forms for use by Area Treasurers

4.9. Personal Claims to the Provincial Treasurer

If it is an event of any kind organised by Province then claims for all expenses must be made direct to the PT. This enables the PT to truly ascertain the cost of such an event and not needlessly draw on Area funds which are for the Area only. These events are budgeted and managed by the Provincial Treasurer and are his responsibility.

Examples are: -

- Cluster Expenses
- Any Event organised by Province such as the Area Treasurers Meeting or other training.
- Convocation Expenses May 2017

Clarity

- If a Tertiary is asked to attend an official meeting i.e. such as the Treasurers meeting, Convocation, or invited to Chapter then it should/and is made clear that expenses are met before the event takes place.
- If there is an official steering group meeting for any of our groups then we currently fund expenses for these meetings.

The Provincial Treasurer does not process the following: -

- If a tertiary wishes to make a retreat and is in need then application should be made to the Knox Dick Fund.
- If a tertiary wishes to attend an event organised by one of our interest groups i.e. JPIC or a optional Provincial event, they do so at their choice and expense.

Note: Email claims are acceptable and payments are always made by BACS

5. Funding and Income

Areas approach funding in many ways. It ranges from fully self-funding to being fully funded from the Province. Some Areas are self-sufficient, and don't apply for Provincial Funds, using surpluses from Area Days to pay their officers' expenses. This means more is available for those Areas which need subsidies. There are many factors which rightly shape these decisions and it is indeed not right that one solution fits all.

The view is that there should be an awareness that where possible Areas should consider what voluntary contributions a Tertiary could make towards Area Days in particular if able.

The system will remain a flexible one with Areas deciding their policy for their Area.

5.1. Tertiary contribution

A tertiary is expected to make a regular commitment, preferably by Standing Order to TSSF if able to do so. These funds go directly to the Province Treasurer. In addition, if eligible, Tertiaries should be encouraged to Gift Aid their contribution.

- Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available from the Provincial Treasurer.

5.2. Area Day Income

Contributions received directly from Tertiaries at Area Days to meet Area Day expenses should always be counted by two people and recorded. One of those two people can be the Area Treasurer but need not be.

5.3. Charitable Donations on Area Days

received directly from Tertiaries for charitable purposes should also be verified as above. It is important to note that donations may only be collected for recognised Franciscan charities and causes. The objects of our charitable status do not allow us to collect for, or support other causes, however worthy.

5.4. Retreats and Quiet Days

If an Area chooses to run an Area retreat this must be fully funded by the participants. This means that where a deposit is required for the Retreat House then all participants should pay a deposit.

No Advance deposits or balances may be made from Area Funds held in the Area bank account. These funds are for Area expenses only.

Deposits and balances for Retreats received by the Treasurer may be held in the Area Bank account prior to payment to the Retreat House.

The practice of funding deposits from Area Funds and receiving individual deposits at a later date is not acceptable due to the risk that participants could drop out and the Area Funds would be faced with a shortfall in funds designated for Area expenses.

If this is due to unforeseen circumstances, then every effort should be made to fill the vacancy. However, if this is not possible and the Retreat House expects full payment then Province will look at this as a refundable expense.

Note: See Area Retreats Secretary Job Description

5.5. Provincial Funds

These are available to meet the expenses of the Area as needed from the Provincial Treasurer. The funds will be sent directly to the Area bank account, normally the same day as you request.

5.6. It is expected that each Area will provide the PT in late March each year a completed Budget form, so that the PT has a clear perspective of what funds will be needed for Areas during the financial Year. (TSSF financial year is June – May.)

- Budget form available from the Provincial Treasurer

6. **Area Treasurers Annual Return**

The annual return form completed by all Area Treasurers is essential and necessary information for the Provincial Treasurer. It provides audit information of both any monies you raised locally and how you spent your money. This has to be incorporated into our Annual Financial Statements.

This is to be completed in respect of the Financial Year ending on 31st May each year. The PT requires the completed form and a bank statement as soon as possible after the year end.

6.1. Basis of your return

The Province uses the Receipts and Payments basis for our Financial Statements therefore all Areas must follow the same method as the Area funds are incorporated into the Provinces Financial Statements each year.

Receipts and payments

(this is simply recording the monies received and expended during the year. It effectively mirrors your bank account.)

6.2. What goes on your Return

In a word everything. This must include monies raised locally either for Area Days, Retreats, or donations to Franciscan charities and everything you have spent. This is important because you are not covered by our insurance for events unless it is included on the Annual return.

Note: this does not apply to Third Order gatherings in a Tertiary's home

6.3. The following are essential

- 6.3.1. You should show the division in your receipts between Area collections and Provincial grants;
- 6.3.2. and in your payments between Area Team and Area Day expenses, and between travel costs and venue costs.
- 6.3.3. The opening balance has to be exactly the same as the closing balance last year, and the closing balance this year has to be exactly the same as the Area bank statement at 31st May, and the auditors require a copy of this.
- 6.3.4. It should add up! (about 10% of Area returns in 2016 didn't actually add up!) So please check your addition!

6.4. Returning your Annual Return to the Treasurer

This is to be returned as soon as possible after the 31st May.

If possible send your return by email rather than in the post. It is accepted that for some this is not possible.

•Annual Return form is available from the Provincial Treasurer. (example in Section D)

Guidance for the Area Formation Guardian for composing the Annual Personal Tertiary Report

Each year in the run-up to Francistide the Order offers professed Tertiaries a formative cycle of 'review, revision, report and renewal'.

The Area Formation Guardian contacts every Tertiary in the Area to ask them to complete an annual Review. This can be by email or post.

Confidentiality

Some information from responses will need to be exchanged within the Area Team to enable the Area to function as a community; Tertiaries will be more honest if they can trust AFGs to treat sensitive information with discretion.

The Area Team should therefore agree and briefly explain in a covering letter its policy for:

Transparency: how might the Area Team use responses in its guardianship of the Area?

Confidentiality: how can confidential information be given to the AFG personally?

Format of the Annual Report

The Provincial Formation Guardian has provided the 'core text' which must be included in the Annual Report. (See the end of this section for this text.)

- Additional or Expanded Questions

In additional further questions can be added by the Area as they think fit. Suggestions and guidance as to possible questions are given here.

This could include one or two questions about other undertakings of profession which are listed in the appendix below. 'Open' questions are better at stimulating reflection and dialogue than 'closed' (factual or yes/no) questions, provided they are not too intrusive.

- Four 'marks of profession' identified by the worldwide Ministers Provincial
These are set out together with Questions that Areas could use to enquire about the relevant undertaking of profession

1. To celebrate the Community Obedience daily
2. To report annually in writing on their living in accordance with the Principles as expressed in their Personal Rule of Life (4.4.4, Const4.3.c)
 - Is there anything that has been particularly challenging or fruitful for you?
 - Do you see your Franciscan vocation evolving in the coming year?
 - Is there anything that would help you in your formation?
 - In what ways are you responding to the three Aims of the Order?
 - How have you been able to fulfil the three Ways of Service, prayer study and work?
 - Would you like to discuss any points raised in this Report with your Area Formation Guardian?
 - Has anything important made a difference to your Franciscan vocation and journey in the past year?
 - Has any one thing impacted on your life in the last year?

3. To renew the Pledge and Personal Rule annually, following a review (4.4.2, Const4.3.a)
 - In the past year have you reviewed your personal Rule of Life?
 - When and where do you intend to renew your pledge?
 - How do you see your Franciscan vocation evolving in the coming year?
4. To make a financial contribution to Provincial funds (4.4.3)

Further undertakings of profession

5. To keep the Third Order Rule which consists of the Principles, the worldwide Constitution and the Form of Profession which contains the words of their life vow (Const 1.1.c)
6. To keep a Personal Rule of Life (4.4.2, Const4.3.a) which interprets and expresses the Principles, and observe its provisions (including the expectation of an annual retreat)
7. To regularly consult a spiritual director, who her/himself has a spiritual director and accepts the Principles as the basis of direction (Const4.1.a)
 - Have you consulted with your spiritual director this year?
 - Could you please provide his/her name?
 - Would you like some help to find a spiritual director?
8. To contribute to the life of the Order, participating in the Local Group (1.2.1), Area meetings and General Chapter
 - Your local group
 - Have you attended Area Meetings? All/most/some/none
 - Have you attended Local Group Meetings? All/most/some/none
 - Would you like to comment on Area and Local Group meetings?
9. To inform the Convenor or Area Minister of reasons for any absence (4.4.5)
 - Is there anything that has made attending meetings difficult this year?
 - Do you anticipate any difficulties attending in the year ahead?

Further expectations of community life

10. To participate in the election of officers (5.5.1) (including accepting nomination if approached and if possible) (Principles Day 24)
11. To undertake an annual retreat of at least 24 hours, or if not possible two quiet days (Novice formation)
 - Have you made an annual retreat or made alternative arrangements (e.g. quiet days)?
12. To inform the Area Secretary and TSSF Membership Secretary if any contact details have changed.
 - Please provide your address, telephone number and email address
 - Having fulfilled your obligations, do you feel supported in your life by the Third Order?
 - Do you have difficulties in fulfilling any of the undertakings of

- profession?
- Would you like to discuss any points raised in this report with your Area Formation Guardian?

Brokering 'buddies' for the annual review of vocation: A further question you could include

Some Tertiaries would find talking to another Tertiary helpful in doing their review. Please indicate (without commitment) if this might be of interest to you next year:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| I might like to do my own review with another Tertiary | Yes / No |
| I might be able to be a 'listener' for another Tertiary in their review | Yes / No |
| I might like a local group or Area meeting to help us with our review | Yes / No |

When next year's review comes round, a list of those who express possible interest in being a 'listener' will be sent to those seeking another Tertiary's company in their review.

Core Text to be included in the Tertiary Annual Report

The annual report is an opportunity to reflect on our 'living of the Principles as expressed in our personal rule of life' (TSSF Constitutions). You might also reflect on the vow of profession, your experience in the last year, your previous report (if you have it) and the prospects in the year ahead. Pages G2-3 of the Manual ask helpful questions.

Having undertaken a review of your vocation, what would you like to report?

Looking forward, how can the Order help you to fulfil your profession? Is there anything you can offer the Order?

As Tertiaries we fulfil our profession 'in company with' others in our Local Group, Area, and more widely, and undertake to give reasons for any absence from meetings. How full a part have you been able to play in our common life this year?

Have you contributed financially to the Order this year, and reviewed how much?

YES / NO

Either bring this form with you to renewals at the Francistide Area meeting or return it beforehand by post or email.

If you cannot attend the meeting please inform your AFG, saying why you will be absent, and how and when you will renew.

(The Core Text document is held in Report in the Appendix)

Guidance for the Tertiary's Annual report to their Area Formation Guardian which can be included with the Report.

Each year in the run-up to Francistide the Order offers professed Tertiaries a formative cycle of 'review, revision, report and renewal'. AFGs are welcome to send these explanations with the Annual Report form to Tertiaries.

- Review and revision:
The cycle starts with the annual review of vocation. As well as reviewing the Principles and your personal rule, you might reflect on the vow of profession, your experience in the last year, your previous report (if you have it) and the prospects in the year ahead. Pages G2-3 of the Manual ask helpful questions. If you make major revisions to your personal rule, please enclose a copy with your annual report.
- Report:
Making an annual report is one of the four worldwide 'marks of the professed' and a sign of our mutual accountability. The purpose of the Annual Report is to invite Tertiaries to account for their 'living of the Principles as expressed in the personal rule of life' (Constitutions 4.3.c).
- Renewal:
Reports will be both issued and returned in different ways according to the individual and Area practice. Reports can be returned at the Francistide Eucharist, or by email or post. Reports should be individually acknowledged and a response made to any specific issues raised. Those Tertiaries who have not submitted a report will need a reminder.
- Return of Reports:
Reports submitted on paper should be returned to the individual by the AFG if a Tertiary requests it, in order to help them in their next review.
- Confidentiality:
Some information from responses will need to be exchanged within the Area Team to enable the Area to function as a community. Such sensitive information will be treated with absolute discretion by the Area Formation Guardian.

Failure to Complete an Annual Review

Completing an Annual Report is an obligation and most tertiaries do so.

It is of course realised that if a tertiary is in ill health or is not mentally able to complete such a report that this obligation should be gently put aside.

However in some Areas the completion of such a report has not been felt as obligatory. They dismiss the Report as simply more bureaucracy and do appear to see the reason for such a review whereas it is integral to our ongoing growth as individuals and as a community..

This raises real problems for the Area Formation Guardian. AFGs are encouraged to approach Tertiaries in their Area, over Renewals, and completion of Annual Tertiary reports, in whatever appears to be the most pastoral way. For some this can be a personal visit and conversation.

It is important where there are a large number of tertiaries who do not see the need to complete a review that this culture will need to be gradually be changed and the perspective and understanding developed in the Area.

It is vital that the Area Team create a plan of action as they have knowledge of where the problems are. Your Link Tertiary and Provincial Formation Guardian are always available to help in any way they can as requested

It is important to ensure that every Tertiary is faced with the challenge of needing to look at their Rule of Life and making their Annual Renewal a very real act of spiritually enhancing their commitment to the Order.

Absence From Renewal

On our journey of faith, the landscape often changes and we need to rediscover our bearings. The Third Order has always understood that its members can encounter times of disorientation, trial and withdrawal. If that is the situation, then a tertiary can seek a period of Leave of Absence for reflection and discernment, normally up to a year at a time, free of the obligations of profession.

Leave of Absence

'Leave of absence' refers specifically to absence from renewal, and is for Tertiaries who wish to be relieved of the obligations of profession.

Offering Leave of Absence makes clear to the Tertiary the reality of their situation – that they are absent, and have not renewed as they should.

The AFG must investigate the reason for absence in order to determine whether a term of Leave of Absence is required or Release from Vows.

Fulfilment of Obligations

Formal 'leave of absence' is not appropriate for a Tertiary who continues to fulfil the four marks of profession, including renewal, but cannot otherwise attend meetings.

Leave of absence is also unlikely to be appropriate for Tertiaries who are confident of their vocation but in poor health or under pressure from personal or domestic circumstances. In such cases the Area Team can authorise a period of convalescence, or the Tertiary revise their personal rule to reflect their current situation.

A Tertiary seeking exemption only from attendance at meetings need only discuss their absence with their convenor / Area Minister in accordance with Statute 4.4.5.

Agreeing Leave of Absence'

The Statutes say:

'A professed member may apply to the Area Team for Leave of Absence, giving reasons for such Leave and the amount of time estimated to meet those reasons. The granting of such leave is the responsibility of the Area Team, subject to ratification by the Chapter' (4.5.1, 2).

The responsibilities of Provincial Chapter are:

'to ratify leave of absence, and any extension thereof, granted to a professed member by the Area Team; in each instance a written statement shall be issued in the name of the Chapter, defining the period of leave and the conditions upon which it is granted, including decisions about the observation of the Personal Rule of Life and provision for Renewal' (3.2.5).

Application Form for Leave of Absence

The form is intended to enable a Tertiary to seek leave in a way which is clear and agreeable to the Tertiary, the Area Team and Chapter, and ensures that the Tertiary seeking leave, and the Area, know what kind of contact they can expect. With the exception of the final signatures and dates, it is best if the Tertiary making the request and the Area Formation Guardian meet together in person to discuss the questions and write in the agreed answers.

Notification to Chapter by the Link Tertiary

At the outset the Area Formation Guardian is recommended to establish from the Link Tertiary when the request can be considered by Chapter. Once the form is completed the Area Formation Guardian must send a copy (or the information contained in it) to the Link Tertiary at least one month before the Chapter meeting at which leave of absence is to be ratified, to ensure it features on the agenda. If it is necessary for leave to take effect before Chapter meets, please make it clear on the form that Chapter is being asked to ratify leave retrospectively.

Ratification by Chapter

Once it is agreed by Chapter, the Link Tertiary should inform the Area Formation Guardian and the Provincial Membership Secretary. The Area Formation Guardian should inform the Tertiary concerned and any other individuals named on the form. At this point a date should be arranged near the end of the period of leave to agree what happens at the end of the leave: the alternatives are to return to playing a full part in the Order by renewing their pledge (with one or a few Tertiaries if pastorally appropriate), seek release from profession, or seek a further period of leave.

Period of Leave of Absence and extension

In order to reduce the risk of losing contact, leave should normally not be agreed for more than twelve months. It should not normally be for longer than three successive years: former Tertiaries may be readmitted direct to profession when the time is right (Statute 4.7).

In the case of a Tertiary who is seeking to extend leave, or other absence from renewal, beyond a third successive year the Area Team should consider release from profession, consult the Tertiary concerned, and report to Chapter their choice between release and a further extension of leave.

If a further period of leave is sought, a new form should be completed. If the Tertiary returns from leave, the Membership Secretary must be informed.

Leave of Absence Form is to be found in the Appendix of the Area Handbook

Failure to Renew

Sustaining our profession in TSSF

At profession, Tertiaries make a vow and a pledge. We vow: 'I give myself to our Lord Jesus Christ, to serve him for the rest of my life in company with my brothers and sisters in the Third Order'. It is this vow that makes TSSF a religious order, as opposed to an interest group. It is not just a personal commitment: it is a mutual one between the Order and the individual.

With our pledge, renewed each year, we promise: 'I undertake by God's grace to keep for one year my Personal Rule of Life'. The pledge gives effect to our vow one year at a time. It then lapses. Because our Profession consists of both a vow and a pledge, our Profession too becomes ineffective if we do not renew.

The TSSF Constitutions (4.3) explain why the pledge is time-limited: 'Annual renewal is required to safeguard against nominal membership, and to give opportunity for the Personal Rule of Life to be revised if needed'. As our lives change over time, we are encouraged to change our personal rule, consulting our spiritual director, and, in the case of major changes, the Area Formation Guardian (Manual G-2). In order to feel able to renew we may need to revise our personal rule of life (or seek agreement to a different pattern of attendance if getting to meetings is a problem) – our Area Formation Guardian is there for us to talk to.

A pledge can be renewed at any Area meeting, or if necessary at a Local Group meeting or with member(s) of the Area Team (Statutes 4.4.2). It is not possible to renew *in absentia*. If someone is unable to get to meetings because of health or infirmity, someone will visit instead – a member of the Area Team will be happy to arrange this.

If a Tertiary has not renewed their pledge for two successive years without good reason, and they have not sought Leave of Absence, then their vow has ceased to have effect – even if they have attended meetings because they have not taken the opportunity to renew.

Consideration as to Action on Failure to Renew

The initial action on the withdrawal, or release, of professed Tertiaries should be taken at Area level, by the Area Team. This is as it should be, because those in the Area are the ones who are in closest touch with the situation. The decision must be ratified, as it is much more than a simple formality, by Provincial Chapter.

Area Teams need, therefore, to make sure that that they consult with their Link Tertiary at an early stage and keep in close touch thereafter. This will avoid conflicting views of judgement when it comes to seeking ratification

Failure to renew in Year 1

Every effort should be made to contact a Tertiary after their first absence from renewal. The Tertiary should be asked to specify a forthcoming local group or Area meeting at which they undertake to renew, and a subsequent check should be made to see that they did renew as promised.

- If a Tertiary has still not renewed, then it is appropriate for the AFG to contact the Tertiary and discuss the reasons for the failure.
- The AFG must use judgement to determine whether the circumstances require a Leave of Absence to be considered or that personal circumstances means that absence is preventing them from renewing.
- The AFG must explore if there is there scope to accommodate their situation by amending their rule of life, give notice of non-attendance for meetings other than renewal.
- If there is still a failure to renew on the part of the Tertiary the Area Team is asked to note that the Tertiary's pledge has lapsed (even if they have attended meetings but not renewed)

Failure to renew in Year 2

If a Tertiary has been absent from renewal for two years or more, their profession has effectively lapsed. Statute 4.6.3 gives AFGs and Area Teams the power to initiate the release from vows of a persistently absent Tertiary. However, the Statutes do not specify the terms for doing so,

After making enquiries of the Tertiary, the Area Team may ask Chapter to release them (under Statutes 4.6.2, 4.6.3 and 4.6.7). If release is approved by Chapter, the Tertiary can claim a further year's grace so that they can renew or seek leave. After that they may always apply for readmission to profession. Therefore, before initiating the procedure to Release the lapsed Tertiary from Vows the following action should be taken first by the Area Team if a Tertiary has failed to renew without good reason by the second anniversary of their last renewal.

- The Tertiary should be invited to meet with an Area officer to explore their situation. There are two scenarios to consider with the lapsed Tertiary: pastoral: are domestic or personal circumstances preventing them from renewing, and should consideration be given to leave of absence if renewal is impossible
- Vocational: are they re-interpreting their faith and identity in ways which might be less compatible with profession in the Order.

Guidance on possible reasons for Withdrawal or Release are found in the section on Reasons for Withdrawal or Release.

Review of Circumstances

Following these discussions and or contact, the Tertiary should be asked to consider if voluntary withdrawal is appropriate. If this is agreed, then the Tertiary should write a letter or email explaining the reasons why they wish to withdraw. This should be sent to the Link Tertiary either directly, or if received by the Area Team passed to the Link Tertiary with the request to action the Withdrawal.

If not, then the Tertiary can again be asked to specify a local group or Area meeting at which they will renew.

Alternatively, if the officer considers it appropriate the Tertiary can be invited to renew privately there and then, although it should be made clear that they will be expected to renew at Francistide in future unless health issues or other valid circumstances apply.

If the Tertiary still does not renew as promised, and has not chosen to request or agree to a Leave of Absence, or Voluntary Withdrawal it is appropriate to begin considering whether they should be Released from Vows.

Area Team action for Release from Vows

The procedure is the same whether this is a voluntary withdrawal or a request from the Area Team for Release from Vows

- The AFG asks for the Area Team's agreement to request Provincial Chapter for approval for release from profession.
- If agreed, the AFG informs the lapsed Tertiary, and contacts their Link Tertiary who will seek Chapter's ratification

Contacting your Link Tertiary

When the Area Team has made a decision to allow or request withdrawal and release, an email should be sent to the Link Tertiary outlining the reasons clearly. Within the limits of confidentiality, this should include copies of all letters written, short accounts of meetings with the person concerned, and any other appropriate detail are essential.

Departure from the Order

It is desirable where possible to make the release to be seemly and dignified. Where the Tertiary wishes, and it is appropriate, it is possible for the Local Group or the Area to make use of the Service of Praying our Farewells in the Manual (2001 Revision.)

After ratification by Provincial Chapter, a letter or email is always sent if possible and appropriate by the Link Tertiary to the person concerned on behalf of the Third Order, wishing them well and promising them our prayers.

Appeals

Finally, even when the decision has been made by the Area Team and ratified by the Provincial Chapter, it is still possible for the Tertiary concerned to appeal. The Tertiary will still have a year's grace (see the Statutes) before the decision is implemented. Should the person concerned *not* wish to be released, he or she should write to the Minister Provincial, who will consult with the Provincial Formation Guardian and set up the Appeal procedure, as described in the Statutes

Review

The Area Team may be asked to conduct a Review of a Release from Vows. This will occur when either the Team or Provincial Chapter are concerned about the circumstances which have caused the Tertiary to request Release from Vows. Your Link Tertiary will either request it or the Area Team will conduct such a review themselves. A report must be sent to your Link Tertiary after the Review is completed.

For Example:

There might need to be a serious question asked about the style or quality of the Novice Training which a particular departing Tertiary has received. This would be particularly true of someone seeking release within only a few years, or even

months of profession!

Or if it appears that a tertiary in personal difficulties or ill health as not received appropriate pastoral support from the Area.

Return of Manual and Professional Cross

Provincial Chapter has requested that every effort should be made for the return of these. However, it is recognised that this is not always feasible and should not be unduly insisted upon.

Reasons for Release from Vows

Fortunately, requests for Release from Vows from the Third Order to Chapter are not very numerous. Please take note of the Statutes, 4.5; 4.6; and 4.7.

Voluntary or Mandatory Release

There is a substantial difference between cases when people are actively *seeking* release, and cases where by their apparent failure to live up to their obligations as Tertiaries, the Area Team begins to feel they should be *asked* to be released. It is a distinction which needs to be born in mind throughout. There are also the cases of tertiaries with whom there is no contact for some years that the Area Team feel should be after careful consideration by formally Released from Vows.

We all need to remember that our vow at Profession was for a life long commitment to the Third Order. To withdraw from it should be seen therefore as a very serious step which should never be taken lightly and require real seriousness and concern.

Reasons for Voluntary Release

When someone asks to be released the Area Team should explore the reasons with great sensitivity and love, being aware of this seriousness, and where appropriate reminding the Tertiary of it.

The reasons behind the request need to be identified and understood, as far as possible. Sometimes they are real and entirely right. Sometimes they stem from a misunderstanding, or from a failure of love on the part of other Tertiaries, which can, when attended to, be rectified and healed. If this is so, the onus is on us to do what we can to put things right.

- As someone's spirituality has deepened they have come to realise that essentially they do not have a calling which is Franciscan so much as e.g. Benedictine and no longer feels at home with the TSSF and are hoping to find another way.
- Someone asks to withdraw because they feel called to explore a vocation to the First, or Second Order.
- Someone has lost his or her belief in God or in the Christian Faith.
- Unable to keep their Rule of Life as they see it.
This can include being less able to get to meetings, or keep their original rule of life, and feel therefore that they should be released,

Mandatory Release

This is invoked by the Area Team when after careful discussion and if possible a meeting with the member concerned it is determined that it would be appropriate for the Tertiary to be Released from Vows.

- No Response to requests to Renew
Where is no response to reminders about the need to review their Rule and renew their vows and refusal to make appropriate arrangements to do so.
- No Contact
Someone has been entirely lost sight of, or not answering letters, or not responding in any way to any approach at all for two years or more.
- Disruptive behaviour
Where a tertiary is disruptive and unhelpful at the meetings they come to,

and other Tertiaries are feeling that it would be better if they were asked to be released.

- Inappropriate lifestyle
Someone is leading an inappropriate life style and causing embarrassment to others, and there is a feeling that they should be asked to to be released
Reference section guidelines on 'lifestyles.'
- Non Attendance at meetings
Where a fit tertiary has not attended any meetings without good reason. (This must be in addition to not renewing their vows. It is not a valid reason on its own.)

The initial action on the release, of professed Tertiaries should be taken at Area level, by the Area Team. This is as it should be, because those in the Area are the ones who are in closest touch with the situation. The decision must be ratified, as it is much more than a simple formality, by Provincial Chapter.

Area Teams need, therefore, to make sure that that they consult with their Link Tertiary at an early stage and keep in close touch thereafter. This will avoid conflicting views of judgement when it comes to seeking ratification.

Re- Admission

Former Tertiaries seeking permission to return.

- Any request to return should of course be looked at sympathetically and lovingly. It does however call for realism.
- If the applicant withdrew while still in the Noviciate, the Area Novice Guardian can decide at what point in the Noviciate formation should be resumed. If, however it was any length of time ago, it is advisable to begin the Noviciate again. In any event the Provincial database Administrator will need to be informed.
- Particularly if the person concerned is a newcomer in the Area, an enquiry to the Administrator can possibly throw light on the original reason for release, which from the Third Order's point of view *may* not in fact be the same as that presented by the applicant! Unless the release was itself less than twelve months ago a Probationary period has to be decided on, which needs to be of not less than six months. During this period the person concerned must be treated as a Novice once again. Provision must be made for them to refresh themselves in a Franciscan Spirituality and also to catch up with such changes as may have occurred during their absence. They need to be allocated a Sponsor for that period, who could well be someone who is already a Novice Guardian. As with Novices, no undertaking should be given regarding their re-acceptance into the Order until that period has been completed.
- As with Postulants, this period of formation begins with the signing and accepting of the Basic Rule, though here the move onto their own Personal Rule of Life will probably be quite speedy.
- The returning former Tertiary must be given a Local Group. It will be the responsibility of the Sponsor to see that this is done. The returning former Tertiary must have a formation meeting with his/her sponsor at least twice during this (minimum) six-month period.
- The Sponsor must see that a Green Data form is obtained from the Area Novice Guardian. The form should be completed at once and sent to the Area Secretary for his /her records and then passing on to the Provincial database Administrator. When the Sponsor is content that all is well, he/she should report so to the Area Novice Guardian and a decision be made by the Area Team for ratification by Provincial Chapter in the same way as that for Novices.
- Once the ratification has been obtained, the returning Tertiary should be welcomed formally and renew his/her membership as with the Welcome of ReAdmission. (Example in Section D of Area Handbook)

Confidentiality in the Third Order

The Concept of Trust

Implicit in all pastoral relationships in the Third Order is the concept of Trust, which is closely allied to creating, at all times, an atmosphere of caring love which prevents situations from becoming judgmental and legalistic. The

Principles underpin this practice of care for each other

When there is a need for Confidentiality

- Clarity on both sides about the extent of confidentiality is important, and whenever confidential information is to be shared with others, it should be with consent. There are exceptional situations, for example, when there is a danger to others or safeguarding, that require sharing with others who 'need to know'. When Provincial or Area officers consider it necessary to disclose information, and consent cannot be gained, it is important that the person should be informed that such disclosure has taken place, or will take place.
- An Application to become a Novice or for Profession implies consent to being named in the required discussion by the Area Team. Pastoral concerns considered by the Area Team may involve life-style issues and religious beliefs. Similarly, such issues may be discussed regarding people seeking release from, or being asked to leave, the Order. In matters of stated confidential information where names are included then the individual should be named only with his or her permission.
- There is an important exception to the necessity to gain consent before disclosing information. If there appears to be any risk of harm to other people, or to the person involved, it may be necessary to proceed without consent, but the person concerned must be informed that disclosure has been, or will be, made.
- A person's dealings with a Spiritual Director are absolutely confidential. The Spiritual Director may only give information to the Third Order with the consent of the person who has confided in him/her. The relationship between Novice Guardian and Postulant/Novice cannot be entirely confidential because of the need to report to the Area Novice Guardian. However, it should be made clear early in the process that matters which throw some doubt on the person's suitability, perhaps for the time being only, may have to be referred to the Area Team. The Area Team may need to discuss personal matters concerning individual Tertiaries, for example matters of lifestyle, attitudes, beliefs, transient problems etc. which may arise from the Tertiary's progress from Novicing to Profession, or if there is a question of release from vows.

Building an atmosphere of Trust

- In agreement with those concerned, it is important to restrict the number of those who are party to confidential information. Determine first the nature of the confidential group – Provincial Chapter, members of Chapter appointed by the Minister Provincial or his/her deputy, the Area Team or members of the Team appointed by the Area Minister. The Local Group convenor may need to discuss a pastoral issue with other group members, but the same issues of confidentiality apply.
- Where a confidential case is discussed with others outside the designated Chapter or Team members, all names or identifying data should be removed or disguised.
- It is the responsibility of the Minister Provincial, and at Area level, the Area Minister, to decide who should share what information.
- Information given in confidence should not be shared with anyone other than designated Team or Chapter members, unless absolutely necessary. Where agreement to share is given, it is very important that those who receive such information clearly understand the requirements of confidentiality.
- Whenever a Tertiary shares private personal information with the Local Group, that information is confidential unless specific permission to pass it on is asked for and received. Such trust is vital to nurturing the local group community life.
- Make all Tertiaries aware that discussions and decisions about individuals may have to be made confidentially and that not everything to do with a group can be decided by general discussion.
- Take extreme care when mentioning an individual for prayer. Even when a situation is disguised in an effort to make it anonymous, there may still be a risk of recognition and identification. Care should also be taken about who is present when playing back answering machine messages. It may be better to use the postal system rather than email when discussing confidential information.
- Minimum written records should be kept at Area level so that Provincial Chapter may be fully informed should an appeal be made. Records so kept must be secure, clear and open to the person to whom they refer. Those compiling the records should be prepared to be accountable for their contents.

(Be aware of Data Protection legislation, but if in doubt check with the Provincial database Administrator)

Lifestyles and Third Order Discipline

From time to time concern arises within the Third Order over the lifestyle of one or more of our members.

'Discipline' shares its root as a word with 'Discipleship'. This section concerns itself with how we as an Area Team, might sometimes have to look, pastorally, at the 'discipleship' of our brothers or sisters.

- Novices
This can occur when the questions arise over whether or not a particular novice should be approved for Profession.
- Tertiaries
The concern may be that a Tertiary appears to other members of his/her Local Group, or to the Area Team, to be living in a way not morally compatible with Third Order Commitment.

Area Team Responsibilities and Perspectives

Principles to guide our actions

It is not possible to be precise and specific on every issue, but there are some principles which we all should bear in mind.

- It is the responsibility of the Area Team to consider and decide on action over such pastoral issues. It may be, however, that you will feel the need to consult with your Link Tertiary, or with the Provincial Formation Guardian, on what might be the appropriate action to take. This will be particularly true if you decide that someone should be asked to withdraw from the Third Order, as any such decision would need to be ratified by Provincial Chapter.

Seldom does anyone criticise any other Tertiary's life style with regard to the vows of Poverty/Simplicity and Obedience. Rightly we consider the living out of others' Rule of Life in these two areas to be a personal and private matter, decided only between themselves, their Spiritual Director and God.

- The Third Order does not have the right to make up its own rules about moral behaviour. We are at root a part of the Anglican Communion, in the various Provinces of the United Kingdom, and must always seek to be loyal to that. So, for example, in the area of homo-sexuality, where our Church allows a far greater freedom than some individual Anglicans might believe to be right*, we have to be true to the spirit of our Church even though we ourselves might find this difficult.
- In the case of marriage breakups the order can be aware of the fact that there are moral standards, which need to be upheld with vigour and conviction. In some instances, other people are very badly hurt by selfish behaviour. A deserted spouse may rightly be very angry. Children may be the victims.

There is not infrequently local scandal to be borne in mind as well. The tertiary's own church could be in the thick of this, but the Franciscan local group or area may be also, and so the Area Team needs to be aware of and

* *Issues in Human Sexuality*, Church of England House of Bishops, December 1991

considerate over them too

- Rumour can be a poor guide. Part of our caution must be that we need to make sure, as far as we can, that what we hear about someone is in fact the truth.
- Which, all in all, explains why decisions in such matters are so difficult.

Area Team Action and judgement

- We need to make absolutely certain that we begin and continue in the Spirit of Christ. The first and the greatest thing we need to do is to pray for the 'offender' and for guidance on what needs to be done before we can seriously address the issue.
- We need to hang onto the guiding principle of Love: love for our brother/sister the Tertiary concerned; love for those who are hurt by his/her action; and remembering the Love of God in Christ, who reaches out to us all, encompassing us all and embracing even this situation.
- We need to have the courage to go beyond other people's reports and see whether a suitable person can discuss with the person concerned and explain the dilemma into which their action puts TSSF. They do not by any means always see this until it can be explained to them.
- It is not necessarily our business to try to persuade such people to amend their way of life. This is especially true for those who genuinely believe, (however erroneously, we might think) that what they are doing is the will of God. Others will be pointing out to them the effect they are having on for example their families and their church. It is our business to point out to them the effect they are having on their fellow Tertiaries.
- We need to remember that we are an order of Penitents, recognising our own failures and the existence of the beams in our own eyes, while bound to give attention to the speck in another's. We stand alongside them, not over and above them. Judgement is, as Our Lord tells us, his business, not ours.
- Christ is a God of forgiveness, and penitence and a turning away from folly is always possible. So too is coming to terms with and ultimately settling down to the realities of a new situation, in which He is still present.
- Sometimes of course, penitence has already come and any offence is in the past. Here, if for example someone has been in prison and is beginning life again, their past should never be a reason for excluding them from our membership.
- Sometimes, having worked through an issue, we need to do nothing. Sometimes we need to explain to other Tertiaries that they should be more accepting and live out their *own* discipleship better.
- However, troubled we might be over someone's behaviour, we should give ourselves, and them, as much space as we can. It is of course possible that they should be asked to leave the Order. (Procedures are outlined in the Release guidelines) It is however also possible to suggest that they withdraw from an active Third Order life for a period of time, not attending TO Meetings, but still living by their Rule of Life. During that space, matters are likely to become far clearer.
- There should then be a specified period of time after which the matter is reconsidered. During it however it is essential if at all possible that someone from the Team should keep in touch with the person concerned.

Tertiaries Absent from Local Meetings, and Area Meetings

There is a distinction between absence from meetings and absence from annual renewal. Attendance is only an absolute requirement for the purpose of the annual Renewal (although even then if necessary the Tertiary can make alternative arrangements), because renewal ensures the Tertiary continues in full profession.

There are valid circumstances which can prevent a tertiary from attending meetings. Some guidance will be found in the pastoral guidance. Statute 1.2.3 recognises that age, ill-health, family or work commitments or a vocation to solitary life can excuse a Tertiary from attending meetings. Statute 4.4.5 requires a Tertiary to give reasons for their absence to the relevant office holder.

If a Tertiary expects to be absent from either Area or Local Group meetings for an extended period of up to a year, they can inform the relevant Area officer beforehand or afterwards. The officer can accept prior notification of non-attendance for an extended period, say up to a year at a time.

When a Tertiary gives prior notice of a period of non-attendance it should be reported to the Area Team, and recorded so as to ensure that the Tertiary is welcomed back after the period of non-attendance.

Tertiaries should attend Area and Local Group meetings when truly and honestly possible.

In the event of absence

- There must be a willingness to be visited, telephoned, receive TON, pray for the Local Group and 'belong' in all possible ways.
- A tertiary is still expected to fulfil the four 'marks of the professed' recognised by TSSF worldwide (namely an annual renewal, report and financial contribution, and regular celebration of community obedience).
- Attendance at the one Area Meeting, for Renewals, at Francistide is essential.
- Or if even attendance at Renewal is not possible, a willingness to allow alternative arrangements to be made for the benefit of the community is necessary.
- And when circumstances change, a willingness to become more active again.

Improving Attendance

With the added emphasis in recent years in the Third Order on the need to belong not only to the Area but also to a Local Group within it, it is important that a review of meeting times and locations should at times take place to hopefully find ways to facilitate greater attendance at meetings.

Persistent Absence

Where a Tertiary is persistently absent without good reason, and has reached the point where they appear to have withdrawn from the Order. Then please refer to the guidance on both Leave of Absence and Release from Vows.

Safeguarding Guidance for Areas

Franciscan Safeguarding

Our life together, locally and internationally, is pledged to *“spread a spirit of love and harmony among all people”* making community and communion visible and so to *“reflect that openness to all which was characteristic of Jesus”* *

Trust and vulnerability are precious foundations of this radical vision of life in Christ.

When such trust is broken and abused the violation and damage is immense. The language of ‘safeguarding’ is now common following public cases of sexual and other abuse in Church and institutions. Franciscans, perhaps more than many others, are committed to safeguarding because of the vision of human community as the Body of Christ.

The Third Order, as a religious community and as a registered charity, is working to safeguard these precious community foundations. The fact that there have been Tertiary offenders convicted of abuse is witness to our vulnerability.

Statement of Policy for TSSF

This can be found on the TSSF website under the Chapter Handbook section. This statement of policy and practice explains the steps that need to be followed if ever there are matters of concern to share. Areas are strongly recommended to download this Statement to understand the procedures that TSSF has in place in order that they can follow these correctly.

Safeguarding Representative

Each Area must appoint an Area Safeguarding Representative. The Provincial Safeguarding team will be providing preparation and training for those in post and must be informed when an Area Safeguarding Representative is appointed. The Job Description for the Representative can be found in Part A of this Handbook under Area Officer Roles.

In the absence of such an appointment the Area Minister is responsible for Safeguarding.

TSSF Provincial Safeguarding Team

This is composed of a TSSF Safeguarding Officer as well as a Chapter Lead member. In addition, we have an agreement with Chelmsford Diocese for advice and support.

Contacts

The names and contact details of current post holders are published in both TON and Little Portion. In addition you can refer to:-

TSSF Website: tssf.org.uk - ‘safeguarding’ and further contact details.

Email: safe@tssf.org.uk

Area Safeguarding Issues

If you have any safeguarding issues then either the Safeguarding Representative or if there is no ASR then the Area Minister should inform the TSSF Safeguarding Officer immediately.

The Provincial team is there to assist in any way. Please do not hesitate to get in touch whenever there are questions.

*See Day Eight, The Principles

Pastoral Issues for Area Teams

Our Order has an increasing number of Tertiaries who are no longer able to take a full part in active community life. Each Area has developed its own way of dealing with the care and nurture of such individuals. There will never be 'a one size fits all' as geography, resources and the number of tertiaries all play a part.

Whatever the solution the TSSF Safeguarding policy must be taken into account through your Area Safeguarding Representative.

Keeping in touch with the Lone Tertiary

It is essential that Area Team has, or does develop a strategy to cope with this need in their own Area. This could range from Local Convenors taking responsibility in their group, to personal 'buddies', or organising an Area wide pastoral scheme. We should be doing all we can to express our fellowship and continuing care.

The issues of failing physical and mental health will challenge both the pastoral visitor and the tertiary themselves. It is paramount that the tertiary still feels included in community life.

Area and Local Group members are usually already closely monitoring and maintaining contact with 'Alone' Tertiaries to prevent them being marginalised and undervalued. Contacts, in order of importance might be visits, (which play a major role and are sometime the only way), telephone chats, and maybe e-mail.

Establishing, operating and maintaining links with a Lone Tertiary

It is stressed that the following is an example, and not a requirement of the Area Team. The strategy as is stated above is to be set by the Area Team.

Delegated responsibility to enable well-structured and organised communication to be established and maintained with lone Tertiaries.

- The Area Team allocates/decides/endorsees which Local Group will keep in touch with the isolated Tertiary. (Alternatively, the isolated Tertiary may request contact through a specified Local Group.)
- The Local Group will identify a contact person who will establish a person-to-person link with the Lone Tertiary.
- The Local Group Convenor discusses these arrangements with the Isolated Tertiary.
- Direct one-to-one communication is established between the contact person and the Isolated Tertiary
- The Lone Tertiary establishes links with his/her officer.
- The contact person reports back to Local Group, bearing in mind the guidelines on 'Confidentiality'.

The above establishes a formal arrangement to ensure that the Lone Tertiary is always in contact with at least one other Tertiary who reports to and from the Local Group. It does not rule out any informal linkages.

The costs of maintaining the 'contact person' – Lone Tertiary link to be borne by the Area

Challenges for the Tertiary

These lone Tertiaries have often been Tertiaries for decades, so they have known and experienced TO group meetings and experienced TO fellowship in the past. They are now less able to get to Local Group meetings, or keep to their earlier Personal Rule of Life. Some lone Tertiaries may be entirely housebound, while others may be in residential homes, care homes, or hospitals. They will often miss the fellowship of their LG meetings.

It also has to be recognised that some will have lost cognitive functions and as such find life difficult. Whatever their mental state they are and should always be part of our Franciscan community.

Keeping the Rule

This must be interpreted as widely and flexible as possible. Tertiaries must be encouraged to modify their rule to suit their particular circumstances and not feel that they have to leave the order because they can no longer keep a full Rule or get to meetings.

Those who are ill often find it very difficult to pray at all and need to be helped to limit themselves to what is possible, not feel guilty because they can do so little, and rely more on the prayers of others.

An approach to a Rule of Life for an older Tertiary or a Tertiary with health issues

Some suggestions on modifying a Rule are set out below.

- Attend the Eucharist on Sunday, if the Service is at a sensible time, and not too long. Alternatively a Weekday Eucharist might be possible. When necessary, though, ask your parish priest to make sure that Communion is brought to you regularly at home.
- Penitence - a short act in private prayer would be good. If you feel the need, ask your parish priest to call.
- Prayer needs to be reduced. Several short periods may be better than attempting one long one (which leads to guilt about nodding off, etc!)
- Self-denial perhaps calls simply for the power to rejoice, to deny oneself the luxury of self-pity.
- Retreat - Possibly a quiet day at home, or a given half hour a week - just for a bit of silence and attention on God.
- Study may be jettisoned altogether. Although if reading is no problem a look at the Church Press can help, and some TV programmes, if well chosen, can be very informative.
- Simplicity - If in control of personal money a simple rule on the level of giving will suffice. If not, try to adopt a cheerful acceptance of the new simplicities of life.
- Work - Something like 'I will cheerfully co-operate with those who are working round me'.
- Obedience 'I will go with the Spirit.'
- But for or the housebound and the bedridden there are often only two essentials:
- To be thankful to God every day, and to receive Communion when someone brings it.

Further guidance and information can be found in the Assisi Booklet on Ageing. (This is currently in production June 2017)

Disabilities

As Tertiaries, we are naturally a dispersed community, and so making sure everybody is fully included is a calling for every tertiary. Most thought and care about facilitating access at local groups and area meetings, means thought and care by each one of us.

Meetings

Most groups, are by now, I am sure are skilled at the basic needs for arranging a meeting, but it's good to refresh our memories occasionally.

Venue check list

- What is the access into the venue like and is there disabled parking?
- What is the access within the venue like, are the doors wide enough and no steps?
- What is the access to the toilets like, wheelchairs do not levitate!
- Is there heating and is it a warm or cold place?
- Is there a loop system?
- Do you need to provide a BSL signer?
- What is the lighting like? Is there varied seating, at least some chairs with arms!
- Will anyone require large print if printed sheets are to be used?
- If refreshments are served, are you aware of special dietary needs?
- The Eucharist
Can everyone access the distribution of in a way that is comfortable for them?
Take into consideration that some cannot stand or kneel, some cannot hold the chalice safely, so do not like it in the round, as they cannot pass the chalice on etc.
and do you have Gluten free wafers available?

Communication - Arranging a Meeting

When letters are sent out about a special meeting, information should include about access, parking etc and a reply slip included asking about any other special needs so that you can be pro-active in meeting those needs.

Hidden Disabilities

There are also other more subtle and hidden needs that should be considered by your groups.

- Reading material
Dyslexia is a common condition, and there are also non-readers for many other reasons.
Is your material always written? Can it be illustrated with sound, pictures, or supported with discreetly spoken word.
- Hidden medical conditions are also frequent.
- Do you have a quiet area where a nebuliser can be used, or an Insulin injection taken without embarrassment?

All of the above is really just having a good knowledge of the members of your area, knowing what they normally attend, listening, and being attentive to their comfort.

Area Disability Advisers

Durham and Cambridge areas have appointed local disability advisers, who act as first port of call for these arrangements for meetings. This works really well, and other areas might like to follow suit.

Some areas prefer to keep things informal, but have people with skills to draw on.

Why not try and identify people in your area who such knowledge, so that the Area Teams know where to go for local information?

Provincial Disability Advice

Disabilities can be many and varied, from poor sight, loss of hearing, to being confined to a wheelchair and other medical problems.

Margaret Armstrong is our Disability Advisor and has a number of expert volunteers who can give advice on particular disabilities including:

- dyslexia and non-reader issues
- mental health issues.
- Audio CD and large print copies of various publication are available.

Contact: Margaret Armstrong for advice

Email: disabilityadvisor@tssf.org.uk

Further details are also available on the back of both Little Portion and TON.

The Local Group

Groups meet in different venues, in member's homes and occasionally in a church hall or room. Times and frequency of meetings will also vary. It is important that such arrangement meet the requirements of the Group.

Programme for Meetings

The Local Group should endeavour to have a varied programme

Franciscan topics

Little Portion or other books of religious interest

Quiet days, or an occasional mediation

An occasional speaker

Some social time together – possibly a shared meal or a walk

Items for discussion from wither Provincial Chapter or the Area

Occasionally meet and share with another Local Group

Worship

Worship, either a Eucharist or the Third Order Office or alternative forms from time to time as suitable

Agenda

This will include

Business notices

News of members of the Group who are absent

Any item a member wishes to share or ask for prayers

Time for Refreshments and social exchange

The topic for the meeting

Contribution

Members should share the tasks of the meeting according to their skills and physical abilities.