

**SAINT FRANCIS REGION**  
**SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**  
**MISSION STATEMENT**

We, the brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order of the St. Francis Region of California, make a commitment to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi. We invoke the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us on our journey.

**REGIONAL GOVERNANCE NORMS**

**Chapter One**  
**The Regional Fraternity**

1. The Regional Fraternity of St. Francis is an organic union of all the local Fraternities officially established by the National Fraternity Council of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order--U.S.A.<sup>1</sup> in the given geographical area of southern California.
2. The Regional Fraternity shall have a Regional Fraternity Council made up of regional officers and representatives of the canonically established local fraternities, and its Regional Spiritual Assistants.
3. The Regional Fraternity shall have a Regional Executive Council made up of its elected and appointed officers and the President of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants.
4. Regional Norms may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Regional Fraternity Council.<sup>2</sup> National Statutes Article 29.1

**Chapter Two**  
**The Regional Fraternity Council**

5. The Regional Fraternity is represented most fully at the Regional Fraternity Council:
  - a. The Regional Fraternity Council is composed of the Regional Executive Council, the local Fraternity Ministers or delegates, and the Regional Spiritual Assistants.<sup>3</sup>
  - b. The Regional Fraternity Council shall meet at least once a year to promote the life of the Regional Fraternity and of the local Fraternities.
  - c. The Regional Fraternity Council suggests and approves policies to be implemented by the Regional Executive Council.
6. Every third year the Regional Fraternity Council shall conduct its elections.
  - a. The National Minister of NAFRA or his/her delegate shall preside at and confirm the election of the Regional Executive Council.

- b. The Regional Fraternity Council shall determine nomination procedures in accordance with the provisions of general and particular law. National Statutes Article 11.1, 2 and 3. Inserting the word Regional in place of National as applicable.
  - c. Election procedures shall follow the norms of general and particular law.<sup>4</sup>
- 7.
- a. No official business may be transacted at a Regional Fraternity Council or Regional Executive Council meeting unless a quorum is present. A quorum is defined as the presence of more than half of the number of those having the right to vote (Constitutions of the S.F.O. 77.4).
  - b. A majority, sometimes denominated an absolute majority, is more than half of the total number of votes cast. A relative or simple majority is the highest number of votes cast on a motion or in an election by those present and voting. National Statutes 9.2.
8. The Regional Fraternity Council shall determine the annual contribution to be made from the common fund of each local Fraternity for each of its members.

### **Chapter Three**

### **The Regional Executive Council**

9. The Regional Fraternity is animated and guided by the Regional Executive Council, which shall include at least the following:
- Regional Minister
  - Regional Vice Minister
  - Regional Formation Director
  - Regional Secretary
  - Regional Treasurer
  - Four Elected Councilors
  - President of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants
- a. Nominees for the positions of Regional Minister and Regional Vice Minister must be permanently professed for at least five (5) years, attended Local Fraternity events regularly, and will have completed these experience requirements:
 

Regional Minister:	Completed at least one term as a member of a local fraternity council.
Regional Vice-Minister:	Completed at least one term as a member of a local fraternity council.

Nominees for the positions of Regional Formation Director, Regional Secretary, Regional Treasurer, and Regional Councilor must be permanently professed for at least three (3) years, attended local fraternity events regularly and have served at least one term on a fraternity council.

It is the responsibility of the Nominating Committee and the Presider of the Chapter of Elections, to assure that the requirements for nominations have been met.
  - b. An outgoing Regional Minister cannot succeed him/herself as Regional Vice-Minister.
  - c. Absent nominees are permitted ***provided*** they have submitted in writing their willingness to accept nomination for a ***specific*** position/s and their willingness to serve if elected.

- d. Absentee ballots are not permitted.
10. The Regional Executive Council must be composed of at least six elected professed members. More Councilors may be added when, prior to its meeting for elections, the Regional Fraternity Council recommends a number of additional Councilors and specifies the need for adding them, and proposes the addition to the meeting for elections.<sup>5</sup>
- a. The President of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants is a member of the Regional Executive Council. Together with the members of the Conference and of the Regional Executive Council, he provides for the spiritual welfare of the Regional Fraternity, assists in achieving the purposes of the Regional Fraternity Council and provides such other assistance and advice as may be requested from time to time.
  - b. No Spiritual Assistant at any level, however, shall exercise active voice on any question involving financial matters or any elective chapter.
  - c. A member of a fraternity council who has been elected to the position of Councilor (not including Secretary, Treasurer, or Formation Director) may be elected to the position of Councilor (not including Secretary, Treasurer, or Formation Director) on the Regional Executive Council and retain the fraternity council position simultaneously. All other fraternity council members – Minister, Vice Minister, Formation Director, Secretary, and Treasurer – relinquish their position on that council when elected to a position on the Regional Executive Council.
  - d. The appointed JPIC Animator shall serve on the Regional Executive Council in a consultative position, without a vote.
11. The purpose of the Regional Executive Council is as follows:
- a. To foster cooperation and communion among the local Fraternities, to suggest helpful policies to the Regional Fraternity Council, and to carry out the decisions and policies of the Regional Fraternity Council.
  - b. To foster contact with other branches of the Franciscan family within the Region.
  - c. To make the charism of our Seraphic Father present in the life and mission of the Church wherein the Region is located.
  - d. To promote knowledge of the Franciscan way of life and commitment to it.
  - e. To approve all formation, including form and methodology, in the local Fraternities. Constitutions of the O.F.S. Articles 92-95 and the National Statutes Article 19.
  - f. To provide a forum for discussion of common problems and goals.
  - g. To be a voice in the public forum for Secular Franciscans.
  - h. To represent Secular Franciscans in contacts with other church or civic organizations, and to promote mutual relationships with such other organizations when appropriate.
  - i. To make Fraternal and Pastoral Visits to local Fraternities according to the general and particular law.<sup>4</sup>
  - j. To present the agenda for the Annual Regional Fraternity Council.
  - k. To recommend the establishment of new local fraternities to the Regional Fraternity Council.

12. The Regional Executive Council meets at least twice each year, at a time and place determined by its membership.
13. Special meetings may be called at the request of the Regional Minister, or at the written request of two or more elected members of the Council.
14. Notice of Regional Executive Council meetings shall be given in writing by the Regional Minister at least two months prior to the meeting. National Statutes 23.7

## **Chapter Four The Regional Officers**

15. The Regional Minister is the servant leader of the Regional Fraternity.
  - a. The Regional Minister shall carry out the duties of his/her office as determined by the provisions of general and particular law, Constitutions of the O.F.S. Article 63.
  - b. In accordance with the duties prescribed by Constitutions and Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order and NAFRA, the Regional Minister shall preside at the meetings of the Regional Fraternity Council and the Regional Executive Council.
  - c. The Regional Minister is the spokesperson and legal representative for the Regional Fraternity in all contacts with other church and civic organizations, as well as with the general public.
16. In addition to the duties assigned by general and particular law, Constitutions of the O.F.S. Article 52.1, the Regional Vice Minister performs such duties as the Regional Council may designate.
17. The Regional Secretary distributes and keeps all records and minutes of both the Regional Executive Council and of the Regional Fraternity Council; preserves the important documents and correspondence of the Regional Fraternity; assists the Regional Minister in sending out announcements of forthcoming meetings of the Regional Executive Council and Regional Fraternity Council; and performs such other duties as the Regional Executive Council requests and by the provisions of Constitutions of the O.F.S. Article 52.2.
18. The Regional Treasurer keeps accounts of all money and has the duty to oversee the property of the Regional Fraternity, unless otherwise determined by the Regional Executive Council. The Regional Treasurer deposits all funds of the Regional Fraternity in such bank accounts as the Regional Fraternity Council designates in the name of the Regional Fraternity and by the provisions of Constitutions of the O.F.S Article 52.4.
19. The Regional Treasurer shall submit Financial Reports for approval at each regular meeting of the Regional Executive Council and of the Regional Fraternity Council.
20. The Regional Treasurer pays out money, by check only, as the business of the Regional Fraternity may require, on the order of the Regional Executive Council. Investment accounts (stocks, bonds, CD's etc.) require two signatures. Checking account requires one signature.

21. An audit shall be conducted once every three years or whenever a new Regional Treasurer takes office, by an expert who is not a member of the Regional Executive Council or by a “board of examiners” consisting of two or more experts appointed by the Regional Executive Council and who do(es) not currently serve on the Regional Executive Council.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Relations with the National Fraternity Council**

22. Once every three years, the Regional Minister, with the consent of his Regional Executive Council, has the duty to invite the National Minister of NAFRA to make a Fraternal Visitation to the Regional Fraternity. A Fraternal Visitation by the National Minister may also be requested at other times for important reasons.
23. Once every three years, the Regional Minister, with the consent of the Regional Executive Council, has the duty to request a Pastoral Visitation from the President of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants.
24. The Regional Minister is a member of the National Fraternity Council and is to attend its meetings. If (s)he is impeded from attending the annual meeting of the National Fraternity Council, St. Francis Region shall be represented by its Vice Minister; if both are impeded, by a delegate elected for the purpose by the Regional Fraternity Council.<sup>6</sup>
25. The common fund of the Regional Fraternity shall pay the travel expenses of the Regional Executive Council when on official business.
26. At the time of pastoral and fraternal visits, and also, on the occasion of their presiding and witnessing elections, the Regional Executive Council shall take care to present to NAFRA officers and to delegates of the President of General Spiritual Assistants a stipend appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required.
27. The Regional fraternity is responsible for contributing to the National Fraternity on a fair share basis from its common fund to underwrite the cost of that fraternity.
28. The provisions set forth in Articles 55 through 59 of the General Constitutions shall constitute the manner and means for transfer, withdrawal, suspension and dismissal from the fraternity and from the Order.
29. The provisions of Articles 83 and 84 of the General Constitutions shall govern the procedure to be followed to secure the removal for cause of the Regional Minister or members of the Regional Fraternity Council.
30. An appeal in writing from any such removal from office may be lodged within thirty days before the Council of the next higher level to that which imposed the sanction; and may also be carried in succession to the other levels of the Order.
31. Interpretation of these Statutes shall follow the rules of canon law, *civil* law where applicable, and may have recourse to Robert's Rules of Order in regard to procedural matters, with the understanding that in the event of any dispute the most cogent resource is prayerful

consideration of our Father and founder Francis, that most courteous and peace-loving man, and his probable point of view.

## **Chapter Six Local Fraternities**

32. The local fraternity is responsible for contributing to the Regional Fraternity on a fair share basis from its common fund to underwrite the cost of that fraternity.
33. Any member of a local fraternity who has been lapsed or not attended any meetings for 3 years or more is required to go through reorientation before being accepted into any fraternity. That reorientation shall consist of their active participation for at least 6 months in the fraternity's initial formation program and in the activities of the fraternity. After completion of the reorientation, acceptance of such transferees or of a lapsed member into any fraternity is at the discretion of the fraternity council. (Constitutions of the S.F.O. Art.55)
34. Newly professed of one year or less should not run for any office in a local fraternity, and those professed for less than 3 years should not be elected as minister, vice-minister, or formation director. A member who has transferred to a local fraternity from another fraternity must have been in the fraternity to which he or she wishes to stand for election for a minimum period of 1 year.
35. Each local fraternity shall submit a year-end statistical report (Annual Report) to the Regional Executive Council on the form given to each local fraternity at or before the annual meeting of the Regional Fraternity in January. The number of professed shown on that form is the basis for the assessment of the annual Fair Share amount to be paid by each local fraternity for support of the Regional Fraternity and is based on the number of active members and candidates in the National database on December 31<sup>st</sup> of that year. If the Annual Report is not received by the Regional Executive Council from each local fraternity on or before February 1st, the Regional Executive Council shall use the number of active members and candidates shown on the National database on December 31<sup>st</sup> as the basis for the current assessment of the Fair Share amount and in the Region's report to NAFRA.
36. In St. Francis Region the limit of affiliates allowed in a local fraternity of the O.F.S shall be fifteen percent (15%) of the active professed members of that local fraternity. (Article 18.13 of the National Statutes)
37. For the canonical establishment of an emerging community in St. Francis Region, a minimum of ten (10) perpetually professed members are required. All other requirements are set forth in Article 46.2 of the General Constitutions.
38. Each local fraternity that plans a Profession shall notify the Regional Executive Council and the Regional Spiritual Assistant of that plan four (4) to six (6) months before the anticipated date of the profession.
39. St. Francis Region recognizes that Fraternity Councils, in an abundance of loving pastoral concern, might not want to lapse professed Secular Franciscan members who, for reasons of infirmity, distance, or age-related conditions, can no longer attend fraternity meetings and/or

events. For this reason, a Fraternity Council may (by majority vote) move a Professed member into “Emeritus” status.

Secular Franciscans in “Emeritus” status are still considered active members of the Fraternity. It is the responsibility of the Fraternity, whenever possible, to remain in loving, prayerful contact with these “Emeritus” brothers and sisters. Include them in the prayer life of the Fraternity, invite them to important events when possible (e.g. Professions, anniversary celebrations, etc.), and keep them informed of Fraternity activities, such as through email, phone calls or newsletters.

“Emeritus” members are not eligible for nomination to any of the O.F.S Constitutional offices, nor can they serve on a Fraternity Council. They are not included in any O.F.S Constitutional quorum determination. An “Emeritus” Secular Franciscan may not vote during a Fraternity election; if they do attend a Fraternity election, their role is only as an observer. The Fraternity continues to have an annual Fair Share responsibility for “Emeritus” members, but at 50% of the prevailing Fair Share rate established by the Regional Fraternity. “Emeritus” members will continue to receive the Tau newsletter and any other national/regional mailings.

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1 Hereafter NAFRA

2. Active voice is the right to vote (*vox activa*). Passive voice is the right to be voted ~ (*vox passiva*), that is, the eligibility to be elected. 3. The Regional Spiritual Assistants are appointed by their superiors of the First Order (OFM, OFM Cap. and OFM Conv.) They act as a collegial body to animate and provide for the spiritual welfare of the Region, and they nominate one of their number to act as President of their Conference to vote at meetings of the Regional Executive Council. 4. Constitutions of the O.F.S. 5. NAFRA Statutes, Art. 21, §15.

6. NAFRA Statutes, Art. 8, §3; Art. 6, §2a.8.3a and 8.3b.

ATTESTED AS APPROVED BY THE REGIONAL FRATERNITY COUNCIL

This 17<sup>th</sup> day of January 2009, at Marywood Retreat Center, Orange, CA

Rock DeSpain, SFO

Rock DeSpain, SFO, Minister

Judith Mussatto, SFO

Judith Mussatto, SFO, Co-Secretary

Carolyn Paxton, SFO

Carolyn Paxton, SFO, Co-Secretary

Additions and Amendments:

Articles 37 and 38, January 19, 2014

Article 39, in 2017

Change in text from SFO to O.F.S in 2018

Chapter III. Paragraph 9. January 9, 2020

Articles 3, 6, 9-9a, 10c&d, 35, 38, & 39. January 15, 2023