



September 2025 Newsletter

by Brady Young / September 19, 2025

Envisioning Fran Fed for the Year 2070

In August, the Franciscan Federation board gathered in Chicago to begin work on our new strategic plan. Guided by facilitator [Cameron Trimble of Convergence](#), nearly fifty people including board members, vowed Franciscans, lay members, and friends participated in a [Futures Lab](#). Together, we imagined the year 2070, a time both distant and urgently alive. Though our visions varied, one truth stood clear: the Franciscan charism remains critically needed in the world. Simply put, the world needs Franciscans, and the Federation can be a key channel for expressing, amplifying, and sharing that charism.



Julianne Wallace
Executive Director

The Piazza

The next step in our Futures Lab was to move from visioning to prototyping, bringing ideas to life in concrete forms. One of the prototypes we created drew inspiration from the [Piazza del Comune](#) in Assisi. Those who attended AFC 2022 might recall a session devoted to the piazza as a symbol for encounter and relationship.



Photo credit:

<https://www.secretumbria.it/en/town-hall-square/>

We were drawn to this image because the piazza is alive with energy. It is a gathering place where travelers arrive by their own paths and participate in the rhythm of community life, joining in prayer or meditation, sharing an aperitivo, pausing for fellowship, or simply resting in presence. In the Federation piazza, no matter the activity, each person encounters the Franciscan spirit and departs carrying it forth in a unique way. The piazza represents opportunities for connection, learning, and growth. It opens a shared space where all can deepen their love for the Franciscan charism and live it together with mutuality, discovery, and joy.

The Murmuration

As our reflections continued, another image emerged that widened our vision. In recent years, the Federation has sometimes been described as a hub, a central place for Franciscans to gather and organize. The metaphor sparked both energy and unease. Some found the image of being the center spoke of a wheel bold yet difficult to embody. Could the Federation ever hold such a role without overreaching?

Flight of the Starlings: Watch ...



Sensing this tension, Cameron offered another possibility by sharing a [video of a murmuration](#), a breathtaking phenomenon where thousands of starlings fly in ever changing and coordinated patterns

without a fixed center. The beauty of the flock lies in its responsiveness, its shifting shape, and its unity in motion.

Inspired by this vision, we began to see the Federation not as a hub or focal point under one roof, but as a murmuration itself, an organic and evolving network of relationships, belonging, and shared movement. It is not about fixed location but about the dynamic flow of life together, attuned to the Spirit and to one another.

The image of murmuration resonates with the heritage of our founders, the Third Order Regular communities, who from the beginning have embodied an adaptable Gospel way of life rooted in simplicity, humility, and service without reliance on a single center or structure. Their mission has always been carried in motion, responding to the Spirit's call in diverse places, forming relationships of mutual support, and living the Gospel within changing circumstances. In the same way, the TOR tradition shows that authentic community emerges from a shared commitment to the Gospel, offering wisdom that enriches the Federation's future and reminding us that flexibility, humility, and communal responsiveness are enduring marks of Franciscan identity.

Building the Future Together

Of course, these images of the piazza and murmuration risk remaining beautiful ideas without bold action. Vision requires commitment and resources. To ensure the Federation's vitality for generations to come, we are creating a strategic plan that includes a new fundraising initiative to sustain the mission long term.

Some may wonder why additional fundraising is needed when membership dues already exist. We have worked to keep membership fees reasonable so that all who wish to participate can do so freely. Because of this, dues cover only a portion of our total expenses. The greater sustainability of the Federation relies on gifts and contributions beyond membership, making these efforts essential to our mission.

Key to this effort is the generous support of communities and individuals who have long carried the Franciscan spirit. We are especially grateful for the Third Order Regular congregations who, through daily support and companionship, have helped sustain the Federation across the years. As we look toward the future together, we invite them and others to consider making gifts that will build financial stability for decades ahead. Endowment gifts, expanded annual contributions, and individual membership giving will become the foundation that supports our shared murmuration into the future.

An Invitation

The future of the Franciscan Federation will be built by the gifts of time, talent, and treasure from people like you. We invite dedicated volunteers, especially those with fundraising skill and campaign experience, to join our Advancement Committee and help shape this future. We also invite all members and friends to support our mission through **financial giving**.

Together, we will keep the piazza lively, the murmuration in flight, and the Franciscan spirit alive and radiant well beyond 2070.



Imagining the Future

As we consider what it means to keep the Franciscan spirit alive and radiant well beyond 2070, Rev. Cameron Trimble offers a powerful reflection drawn from our recent strategic planning session—a meditation on the kind of presence the world will need from us in the years ahead.

The Future Needs the Franciscan Spirit

A Meditation by Rev. Cameron Trimble

“I’ve just spent two days in the company of extraordinary souls—nuns, friars and laity from Franciscan communities across the world—gathered not to preserve the past, but to imagine the future.

They weren’t strategizing how to keep institutions alive. They were asking a far more radical question: *What kind of presence will the world need from us in the years to come?*

As we dreamed together about the shape of the future—ecological collapse, social fragmentation, technological upheaval, spiritual longing—what emerged was more than a strategy. It was a kind of *spiritual template*, one that reflects the best of the Franciscan tradition but resonates far beyond it.

These contours felt like an invitation not just for friars and nuns—but for all of us.

We sense that in the future the Earth will bear more wounds than ever—burned forests, rising seas, displaced peoples, grieving species. The world will need *healers of the Earth*—those who see creation not as a resource to be exploited, but as sacred kin to be honored and protected.

We will need *prophets of simplicity*—people who live with open hands in a clenched-fist world, who embody the truth that joy is not in accumulation, but in deep connection.

We will need *bridge-builders and peacemakers*—those who know how to stay present across difference, who choose communion over control, who embody humility in a culture obsessed with being right.

We will need *companions of the poor and marginalized*—not as rescuers or heroes, but as fellow travelers. We will need people who understand that dignity doesn't come from status or wealth but from our shared humanity and sacred worth.

And perhaps most of all, we will need *teachers of joy and beauty*—those who laugh freely, grieve deeply, and see God in the ordinary. They will know that delight is a form of resilience.

These aren't just Franciscan callings. They are human ones. They are the contours of a spiritual life grounded in humility, joy, simplicity, and solidarity—qualities found in many traditions, but illuminated here with Franciscan light.

The old stories of control, domination, and separation are crumbling. In their place, we are being invited to remember a deeper truth: that we belong to one another, that the Earth is alive, and that love is still the most powerful force we've ever known.

The Franciscan charism offers a pattern, a melody line in a larger symphony of sacred living. It's a witness we need—not necessarily to become Franciscans (although that is a good option), but to become more fully human.

Let us take up that call—not in robes or rules, but in reverence and relationship.

The future doesn't just need new systems. It needs new souls.

Reflection Questions

- Which of the five invitations—healer, prophet, bridge-builder, companion, teacher—calls to you most deeply in this season of life?
- How might you express humility, simplicity, or joy in your everyday choices?
- What spiritual traditions, stories, or practices remind you of your place in the sacred web of life?

A Prayer for the Day

Holy One, You who are present in sparrows and street corners, in silence and song, in friars and freedom-dreamers, Teach us how to walk gently. Make us healers of a wounded world, bridgers of divides too long ignored, companions to those we've forgotten, singers of joy that can't be silenced. Strip away what is false, strengthen what is true, and shape us into people who live not for praise, but for peace. Amen.

Spiritual Practice — Living the Invitation

Today, listen for the part of the invitation that speaks to you most. Don't force it. Let it find you.

- Maybe the Earth will call you to tend her—by walking, planting, weeping.
- Maybe simplicity will whisper in your habits—asking you to unplug, declutter, release.
- Maybe a fractured relationship will offer a chance to build a bridge, even a small one.
- Maybe joy will tap you on the shoulder, inviting you to sing aloud or notice a dandelion.

You don't need to join an order or take a vow. You just need to respond, in the quiet way your life allows. Start small. Stay sincere. Trust: this is holy work.

The future is not only shaped by what we build. It is shaped by how we walk.

Let's walk with reverence, humility, and love.

Let's walk the way the Franciscan spirit teaches—soft-footed, open-hearted, deeply rooted.

May we find joy in the journey.”

Board Spotlight: Carolyn Townes, OFS

A Re-introduction to the Franciscan Federation

I first heard about the Franciscan Federation while living in New York City. I was newly professed and did not know anything about what the Federation was, let alone what it did.



It was about 2005 when I first heard the name Franciscan Federation. This intrigued me as I wanted to learn everything I could about the Franciscan family. I still heard nothing about what this Federation was or did.

Fast forward to 2017 and I came across an invitation to the Federation's Annual Conference. I decided to go, especially as I heard Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) would be one of the main topics. At that time, I was the JPIC Animator for the National Secular Franciscan Order and thought I needed to be at that discussion. It was a wonderful gathering in that I knew so many of the sisters in attendance. It wasn't so wonderful in that JPIC was hardly mentioned. The talks were great and I met a lot of old and new friends. But that was it. Nothing more.

It was several years later during lockdown that I was approached to be in what was called an Emergent Group. I had no idea what that meant and felt I had had my share of the Federation. The Holy Spirit nudged and I whined and complained. Then the Holy Spirit shoved, hard, and I agreed to the year long process of re-imagining and visioning. I met some fabulous folks who became friends. It was an incredible experience; finally I had a say about this Federation thing.

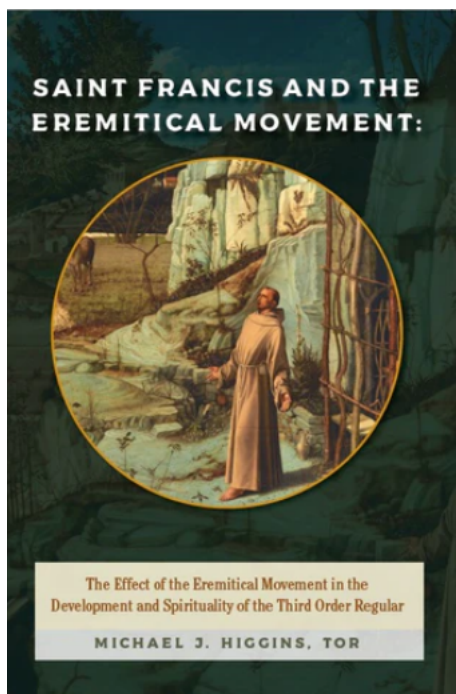
To be honest, I still did not know what the Franciscan Federation was, but I did know it was full of Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted people, so the possibilities were endless. For the 2023 Annual Conference, I suggested the theme of Greccio, as it was the centenary celebration. I went to Greccio in May of 2023 and prayed for the Federation and in June, I attended the AFC again. This time, it was quite different. There were young people, Secular Franciscans, Franciscan associates, and anyone with a Franciscan heart. The event was Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. I thought now this is what I had imagined the Federation to be – welcoming, inviting, joyful, and filled with music.

I wanted to be a part of the Federation to be that conduit between the Third Orders of St. Francis. Even though we have the same roots, we were somehow severed, and the split was tremendously felt. I wanted to be the

bridge that would help unite us again – working for the same causes with the same charism. There are many Seculars who have no idea what the Franciscan Federation is or what it does. I can help answer those questions; especially for newcomers.

Being a member of the JPIC Commission and now, on the Board of Directors, I definitely have a voice at the table. But I also have a voice for those with no voice. This truly inspires me to continue my involvement with the Federation. I have been at many tables and those tables showed no or very little diversity. I can bring a fresh perspective and give voice to those who need to be heard but have no way of jumping to the front of the line.

God has brought me here and by God's grace, will keep me here for such a time as this.



[Click Here to Purchase](#)

New Book Announcement

We're pleased to announce a new release by board member Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR. His latest book explores the history of the eremitical life in the Church, its lasting impact on Saint Francis of Assisi, and how his influence affected the birth of the male branch of the Third Order Regular.

Drawing on his experience as former Minister General and his doctoral work at the Antonianum in Rome, Fr. Michael offers a thoughtful and well-researched look at a lesser-known but deeply meaningful part of Franciscan tradition.

The book can be purchased at franciscanpublications.com.

Celebrating Franciscan Month

Conceived in 2023 by Brother Gregory Cellini of St. Francis College, Franciscan Month is now a national effort to share the Franciscan message far and wide. A diverse team of over 20 collaborators—spanning all three orders, lay leaders, and Secular Franciscans—has come together to bring this vision to life. Discover how you can take part in Franciscan Month through gatherings, prayers, and meaningful resources. Visit franciscanmonth.org.



Get Involved

Upcoming Events

Celebrating 60 Years
A Legacy of Faith & Vision

Join the Federation for a virtual panel featuring wisdom, history, and vision from leaders who shaped our mission. This special event is also a fundraiser, with all proceeds going directly to support the ongoing work of the Franciscan Federation.

September 29, 2025
7:00 PM ET/4:00 PT

Featured Panelists

Sr. Margaret Carney
Sr. Joanne Brazinski
Sr. Pat Rogan
Sr. Kathleen Moffatt



Honoring 60 Years of the Franciscan Federation

Celebrate 60 years of the Franciscan Federation with a special 90-minute webinar panel featuring voices from our rich heritage alongside emerging leaders.

Monday, September 29th

7:00pm Eastern Time

Online via Zoom

Pay What You Can

Join thoughtful reflections and a live Q&A as we explore our history, mission, and vision for the

Virtual Transitus Service

Thursday, October 2nd

7:00pm Eastern Time

Online via Zoom

Free

Join Franciscan Justice Circles across the U.S. for a moving online Transitus Service. Together, we'll honor the passing of St. Francis of Assisi and reflect on how his life continues to shape our shared call to peace and justice.



[Register for Transitus Event](#)

Virtual Annual Retreat

Details are coming together for our 2026 Annual Virtual Retreat, scheduled for Saturday, February 7th from 1–4pm Eastern Time.

Join us for engaging speakers and meaningful opportunities to connect with fellow Franciscan Federation members.

More information will be shared soon—but for now, mark your calendars for this special gathering.

SAVE

*Feb.
7*

THE

2026

DATE

ANNUAL VIRTUAL RETREAT

JOIN US IN ADVANCING THE FRANCISCAN FEDERATION!

As a valued member of our community, you know how much the Federation means to its members and also to the continuation of the Franciscan charism to people all around the world. Every program we offer is possible because of people like you, and we're inviting you to be part of the Federation's next chapter.

To continue making a meaningful impact, we rely on the generosity and commitment of our supporters. Your donation, large or small, plays a pivotal role in fueling our initiatives, sustaining our programs, and building a vibrant Franciscan future.

We invite you to make a special gift today and be an essential part of the Federation's advancement. Visit www.franfed.org or click on this picture to contribute securely.

Whether you are able to give a one-time donation or become a monthly supporter, your generosity will help us continue our vital work. Thank you for advancing the Federation alongside us—together, we move forward!

Thank you for your support!

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Franciscan Federation

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