

March 11, 2026

Dear Sisters,

If you ever wonder about the relevance of the Franciscan spirit and the Franciscan worldview, now is the time to embrace the peace Francis lived and for which our world is crying out! In this time of global chaos, let peace at least live in our own lives and hearts and let us pray for peace in all the places where it is so needed!

We write to share information to keep you informed of important things coming and to assist you in planning.

Summer Gathering 2026 – June 29th to July 1st

This year the Franciscan family celebrates the 800th anniversary of the death and transitus of St. Francis – the culmination of four years of significant anniversaries in our order's history. Our sisters in Brazil held their semi-annual assembly at the end of February with the theme: *Women of Hope in Times of Crossing*. We are borrowing that theme for this summer's gathering.

Our consultant, whom you met last summer, Becky Mathis-Stump, will facilitate our meeting. We will also have a speaker with us on Tuesday, the second day of our time together. Her name is Sr. Kelly Connors, PM. Kelly is a canon lawyer who will be working with our congregation for the next several years as we plan and work our way through so many of the canonical challenges ahead of us. After completing her doctorate in canon law, Kelly worked at the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in Rome. She has worked with congregations of every size and from countries all over the world. Kelly will be presenting information on the transition to a Commissary or Appointed Canonical Leader, as well as educating us on what such a person does and does not do for a congregation. We will get a better sense of what we need to do leading up to that time. She will also do a little work on setting the stage for our next chapter in 2027.

Please plan to be in Joliet all three days, especially if you expect to be a delegate for chapter. We will send out delegate information and forms in the late spring before we gather in June. We will not finish until 4:00 on Wednesday, July 1st, for those making travel plans.

General Chapter Information – July 28 to August 2, 2027

While we do not have many details about our next chapter, we do want you to get these dates in your calendar. The chapter will take place at a hotel within 25 miles of Joliet. All delegates will stay at the hotel. Transportation will be provided from Joliet for all who need it.

Our chapter will be co-facilitated by the women mentioned above. Kelly will facilitate the discernment processes and election of leaders; Becky will facilitate sessions with speakers, table processes and conversations. We will begin preparations for chapter this spring with an initial local chapter process to help us identify matters of greater importance. We will be looking for your input on themes, hopes, content and so on.

Our intention at this time is that members of the Central Administration, working with our facilitators, will serve as the steering committee and be responsible for chapter planning and agenda setting. It has become increasingly difficult for sisters to travel to meetings, and we believe most of the planning needs to be done face to face. All of this will be done with many opportunities for your input – both from those who can and cannot serve as delegates in 2027.

In the spring you will receive a first mailing regarding chapter to begin the process of discerning your own willingness and ability to serve as a delegate. We will also be inviting you to consider working on one of the committees we will need in order to prepare for and carry out the chapter, e.g., prayer, ritual and liturgy; ambiance; social activities.

Initial Engagement of Local Chapters in Chapter Preparation

Within the next two weeks, you will be receiving a mailing in preparation for our summer gathering. We are asking that sisters read an article, take some time for personal reflection and then gather with their Local Chapters for prayer, conversation and to provide feedback to the leadership team. It is an opportunity to further explore something we spent some time on last summer: how to make use of our resources to continue to expand our Franciscan mission – generously, wisely and with the hope for generativity. We expect that this will lead to our naming one of our matters of greater importance at our 2027 chapter.

Other News

Brazil

Sisters Sue Bruno and Jeanne Bessette will be traveling to Brazil on April 11th and returning to the U.S. on April 24th, 2027. Much is developing among our sisters in Brazil:

- Exploring the possibility of another congregation of sisters taking over the administration and operation of San Damiano School.

- Plans for the sisters living at San Damiano Convent to move to our other congregation houses, making way for the expansion of the school.
- Initial planning for a new building to provide office and meeting space for our sisters.
- Awaiting Sister Jeronima Marques da Costa's paperwork to join the Allegany sisters' mission in Mozambique for the next couple of years. She has been welcomed by the sisters, but now the wait is on between the two governments.

Please keep our sisters in your prayers as they discern and move through these significant developments.

Long Term Care Facilities and Residential Settings

All of our sisters who are in need of skilled / nursing care are now residents of St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville. This is also our place of choice for those in need of rehab after hospitalizations.

We are also in the process of moving our two sisters from StoryPoint in Romeoville. All of our sisters who qualify for assisted living will be residents of Heritage Woods in Minooka. Sisters in need of memory care or skilled nursing will be residents of St. Patrick's.

Working with the staffs of two homes instead of four will be much more manageable for our sisters who serve as their Coordinators. It has become increasingly challenging to deal with multiple systems, rules, business offices, medical providers, physical therapy departments, etc. We want to put our energies into our sisters and not into bureaucracy.

In the meantime, we know you are focusing your prayers on peace and protection for all of those who have been thrust into harm's way.

Peace and all good!

Your sisters,



Jeanne Bessette, OSF
President



Peggy Quinn, OSF
Councilor



Susan M. Bruno, OSF
Councilor



Rene Simonelic, OSF
General Secretary



MJ Griffin, OSF
General Treasurer