

# Franciscans Together

## An invitation to action in 2019

Today's damaged and conflicted world needs witnesses of 'peace and good'. That is what Franciscans are called to be. As fellow members of the Franciscan family, we can help each other fulfil that vocation.

Following a meeting in London last year with representatives of Franciscan Action Network in the United States, branches of the Franciscan family in the UK have met again. We saw a need in the UK for a somewhat different network, open to Franciscans who feels called to practical action in the world today. For now, we imagine meeting once a year to bring focus to a particular area of concern and possible action.

You can read more about our reflections and plans overleaf. Let us share with you a specific invitation for 2019.

### Muslim-Christian dialogue

Eight hundred years ago, during the Fifth Crusade, Francis travelled to Damietta and entered the camp of the Sultan Malik al-Kamil. The lesser brother of everyone wanted to meet and talk with the Sultan as one human being to another. Their conversation subverted the logic of division and violence. What a challenge and inspiration for us, in the polarised society of Britain today.

Here are some simple actions we would like to suggest for the coming year:

- Take part as a group in [Visit my Mosque Day](#) on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019. 200 mosques across the UK are being encouraged to hold open days to welcome in their neighbours from all faiths and none and building bridges across communities.
- Arrange a screening of the film [The Sultan and the Saint](#). The film is available through all the usual online outlets, and provides an ideal starting point for discussion within a Franciscan or parish group. The TSSF website has a [resources page](#) that is full of ideas for reflection.
- Spend time with a local Muslim community in hospitality, exploring the story of the 1219 meeting and reflecting together on its significance today, and sharing something of our sacred texts, and our own faith journeys
- Join a day exploring the significance of the meeting for today on 16 September 2019 at [Sarum College, Salisbury](#)
- Making origami doves of peace as a gift to local people. Watch [this Youtube](#) video and pass the skill on in your community – and then pass on the doves you make to civic leaders, businesses or friends.

If you would like further advice on these opportunities contact [Emily Miller tssf](#). For details of the next meeting in January 2020, email [Jamie Hacker Hughes tssf](#).



## Introducing 'Franciscans Together': A report of our meeting on 26 January 2019



**At the meeting of Franciscans Together on 26 January 2016:** Kathy Maskens OFS, Jenny Owens TSSF, Mark Woodgate novice TSSF, Paul Bodenham TSSF, Penny Bell-Wright TSSF, Jamie Hacker Hughes TSSF, Sam SSF, Patrick Lonsdale OFM, Friar Giles OFM (Conv), Fr Terence Bateman novice OFM (Conv), Emily Miller TSSF.

In October 2018 over 30 people from many branches of the Franciscan family in the UK met to hear about the work of Franciscan Action Network in the USA. This follow-up meeting had two aims:

- to assess the support for the whole proposal of Franciscan Action in the UK or something similar
- to talk over and agree the area/s of concern with which we might wish to be involved.

We were confident there is scope to collaborate across the Franciscan family on matters of justice, peace and care for creation. Several years after the closure of the Franciscan Association and Franciscan International Study Centre, we enjoyed simply having an opportunity to meet and renew our bonds as sisters and brothers in the Franciscan family.

There are many concerns that claim our attention if we see the world as Francis did:

- the earth, whose contemporary crisis is addressed in a Franciscan spirit by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*
- reconciliation within our fractured society following Brexit. We could offer a peaceful presence in places of angry protest, or even by bridging the Leave-Remain divide within our own communities
- Muslim-Christian dialogue, 800 years on from Francis' meeting with the Sultan Malek al-Kamil at Damietta, about which you will have read more on page 1
- making peace, through simple, symbolic actions like leaving 'peaceprints' in our neighbourhoods
- helping those who are vulnerable and homeless, with a focus on the person, and by tackling the structural causes of their vulnerability
- hospitality for refugees, asylum seekers and others 'under the radar' – including the practical hospitality some of our Franciscan houses already offer.

Equally important is making an authentic response to the needs of the world in light of our charism. From Francis we inherit a case for action, 'tools and schools', and steps to organising. It is these that ready us to practise fraternity, non-violence and reverence for creation.

We shared how our communities currently organise engagement in justice, peace and care of creation. For instance:

- OFS have become members of the National Justice and Peace Network, and has appointed a national JPIC representative
- OFM have an animator for JPIC
- SSF offer housing to refugees, run a house (Hilfield) with a ministry of peace and care for creation, and have members who participate in Justice & Peace Links
- TSSF have a JPIC representative in each Area, and a 'Walking the Talk' project has just reviewed how the order engages in JPIC.

Despite all the needs that claim our attention and the riches of our charism, we are mindful of our limitations. We pray that our collaboration will evolve over time. The model for joint Franciscan action in the UK is likely to be very different from FAN in the United States. We are starting modestly with a simple focus with which we can invite you to share in action.

Let's not forget also that great work is being done by agencies, charities and grassroots initiatives. Many of us already support such activities, or give time or money to them ourselves. Our communities could enter into partnerships with them to do what we could not do (or do so well) on our own.

Given the events 800 years ago, we have decided to suggest using 2019 to renew dialogue with Muslim neighbours. That is how our invitation above overleaf. We will meet again in a year's time (in London on 25 January 2020) to review action over 2019 and make plans for 2020, potentially focusing on climate change. We felt this simple formula would be the most effective start to our collaboration.