

# Franciscan Alumni Association



Volume 35  
Spring 2025

Established May 28th, 1989

Serving the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Atlanta, GA  
(The new Franciscan province in the United States)

[www.franciscan-alumni.org](http://www.franciscan-alumni.org)

## 2025 Reunion Plan: 2-5 October in Cincinnati

This year's reunion of the Franciscan Alumni Association will take place in Cincinnati from October 2 through October 5. This will include a Transitus service, which will be on the evening of Friday, October 3. The agenda and timing will be similar to last year's reunion, which was greatly enjoyed by all attendees.

If you think you can attend this year, please email the reunion committee so we'll be prepared for you and your guest(s): [2025Reunion@franciscan-alumni.org](mailto:2025Reunion@franciscan-alumni.org). This isn't a contract. You can cancel anytime. Please see the registration form on the back page of this newsletter.

### Schedule

See the reunion page on the FAA website for updates to the plan.

### Thursday, October 2

**4 pm** – Reunion registration and hospitality table opens at the Springhill Suites by Marriott

**6 to 10 pm** – Dinner and social at The Black Sheep Public House, 3807 North Bend Rd, Cheviot, OH. Attendees will be responsible for their dining and beverage expenses.

### Friday, October 3

**6:30 – 9:30 am** – Hotel breakfast

**7:30 – 7:45 am** – Morning prayer at the hotel for those interested

**Morning & afternoon** – Several options, including Freedom Center, Findley Market, Reds Hall of Fame, Wiedemann Brewery, St. Mary Cemetery where several friars are buried, 11 am BB Riverboat tour with lunch (\$41).

**7 pm** – Transitus service followed by refreshments and fellowship: Corpus Christi Church 2014 Springdale Rd, Cincinnati We plan to have an alumni and friar choir like last year... exactly like last year. Please help again with this, if you can. Fr. Larry Dunham, Fr. Fred Link, and Mike Niklas will recruit singers soon.

### Saturday, October 4, 2024

**7 – 10 am** – Hotel breakfast

**7:30 – 7:45 am** – Morning prayer at the hotel for those interested

**9:30 – 11 am** – Morning retreat:

"Franciscan Spirituality of Beauty," with insights from St. Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus, in chapel of former St. Francis Seminary, 10290 Mill Road.  
**11:30** – \$10 lunch buffet in Study Hall of the former seminary.

Feel free to tour the campus, hike, socialize, play, relax.

**1 – 3 pm** – Optional activity: Assist the Garden Guild at StoneBridge at Winton Woods with a planned project on the

former seminary grounds. Meet at the parking lot by the back door of the gym building at 1 pm.

**5 pm** – Mass in SFS Chapel, followed by a group photo shoot in Chapel, then dinner around 6 pm in Study Hall (\$25), a brief FAA Chapter meeting, presentation of awards, and a remembrance service for members who died during the past year.

### Sunday, October 5

**7 – 10 am** – Hotel breakfast

**7:30 – 7:45 am** – Morning prayer at the hotel for those interested, and more farewells.

### Where to stay:

A group rate has been arranged with Springhill Suites by Marriott, 12001 Chase Plaza Drive, Cincinnati. The group name is "Franciscan Alumni Reunion." Breakfast, parking, and Wi-Fi are included in the rate. The rates are good for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Reservations must be made by September 2, 2025 in order to secure the group rate. The available room rates:  
One king bed – \$134 / night + tax  
2 queen beds – \$139 / night + tax

You can call the hotel at 513-825-9035 to make a reservation. Please note that the **deadline to get these rates is 2 September.**

We hope to see you at the 2025 Franciscan Alumni reunion!

## 2024 Reunion Recap



More than 100 Franciscan alumni and guests attended the 2024 Franciscan Alumni Association reunion, which included a Transitus service.

Planning for the event began in late 2023, when it was decided that the next reunion would be held in October instead of the usual June dates. There were several reasons for this change:

- Transitus happened to fall on a Thursday, making it practical to include a Transitus service
- More comfortable weather in the fall
- Cheaper airfare and hotel prices
- Fewer conflicts with vacations, etc.

Mark Kling '75 served as coordinator for the reunion. Fr. Larry Dunham '65 and Mike Niklas '75 were instrumental in planning the Transitus service, which included Latin hymns by Falconara and a psalm setting that Mike wrote. Many alumni and friars were recruited for the choir; they learned their parts via email. Fr. Fred Link '65 directed the choir. St. Clare Chapel at the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor was the site for the Transitus celebration. The large chapel was filled that Thursday evening. The celebration of Francis' passing from life on earth to life with God in heaven was very moving. Said one of the friars who took part in Transitus that evening: "That Transitus was the finest I have been to since cleric and seminarian days, and that was a long time ago."



Fr. Fred Link '65 patiently rehearsing the Transitus Choir



## 2024 Reunion Recap

The celebrant for Transitus was Our Lady of Guadalupe Provincial Councilor, Fr. Ed Tlucek, OFM.

On Friday, many attended a tour of the Great American Ball Park, which was arranged by Dave Gehring '72. That afternoon, more than 30 people enjoyed a leisurely Ohio River boat ride. And in the evening, the party room at the Public House was packed with close to 100 alumni and guests.

On Saturday morning at the former St. Francis Seminary, there was a productive discussion about "Our Futures Joined Together," which included an update on recent efforts to engage with current and past members of other provinces and their alumni or reunion activities.

There was an immersion in nature for alumni on Saturday afternoon, with several helping the Garden Guild with a project while Mike Niehaus '81 and Frank Lopez '77 and others led a nature talk that was followed by a healing





Donn Wiley '76 and Tom Shumate '77



Joe Sears '75, Dave Imhoff '70, and Fr. Henry Beck, OFM '70

service led by Fr. Robert Seay '52. See "The Nature of Healing" article, page 12.

Fr. Larry Dunham '65 and Fr. Henry Beck '70 concelbrated the 5 PM Saturday Mass. Liturgical musicians included Mike Fritsch '75, Joe Sears '75, Tom Shumate '77, Donn Wiley '76, and Donn's wife Mary.

Paul Landers '76 and the Knights of Columbus prepared and served a delicious dinner in the former study hall. After dinner, there were five award presentations.

- Christian Life award: Fr. Robert Seay '52
- Humanitarian awards: Jerry Kaelin '69 and Bern Schwartz '69
- Joe Sears '75 presented Franciscan Alumni Assn Service awards: J D Moya '70 and Rick Kasper '70 (accepted on their behalf by Dave Imhoff '70 and Fr. Henry Beck '70)

The evening ended with a remembrance service.



J D Moya '70 and Rick Kasper '70



## 2024 Humanitarian Award: Bern Schwartz '69



### Humanitarian Award presented to Bern Schwartz by Jerry Kaelin '69

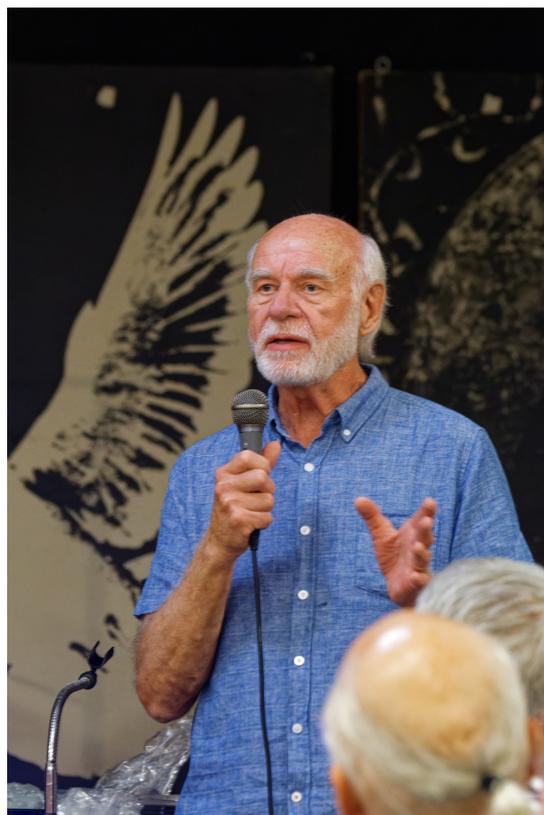
I'm honored to co-receive the 2024 FAA Humanitarian Award with you, Bern; but I'm even more honored to present this plaque to you.

Our lives have been intertwined for nigh on 60 years. In 1965 there were around 200 students at SFS. Our freshman class had 68 and we were divided into 1A, 1B & 1C. As we were in different groups that first year, it took a while for us to get to know one another. Our paths began crossing as I became your barber -- and both of us loved sports. Eventually I averaged a double/double in basketball and you brought home a couple Picnic Day baseball victories. You made sure you were around on Visiting Sundays for the treats my parents brought -- and then kept an eye out on my freshman brother

Steve when he arrived at SFS two years later.

At Duns Scotus our friendship developed in those physics, metaphysics, ancient philosophy and Latin classes -- all the while the Vietnam War was also waging. As Bernie mentioned, we organized some protests at Honeywell HQ, just down the road from Scotus. Some temporary professed friars were in their habits and a few donors saw the protest and complained to DSC president Fr. Corman. We regularly got in just enough trouble to be named "Fine Christian Gentlemen" by Fr. Leander.

What really touched Bern and began his 55 years of





Louvain in Belgium, and upon returning to Detroit he landed at IBM. In his 36 years there he became a manager of IBM's account with General Motors. Perfect for Bern, as his job "demanded" travel all over the globe. But always back

academic enhancement for at-risk children and adults, designed to build self-sufficiency skills for academic and employment success, personal achievement and dignity." Check out: <https://www.svsfcenter.org/>

Bern helps enhance the Board's connections with city, county and state agencies, while also continuing to create fundraisers to insure SVSF's ongoing work and ministry.

Jesus, our families and St. Francis taught us we are children of God, sisters and brothers all. Relationship is everything. Bernard Vincent Schwartz, you've lived that since at least 1969.

service, still going strong. He began volunteering at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center for Children (SVSF). The Daughters of Charity founded a school in Detroit in 1844 and in 1851 began housing orphans. In 1929 the Sisters began a radical and effective way of working in smaller groups, housing wards of the state in cottages in suburban Farmington Hills. There and for all 4 years at DSC, Bern began volunteering with now life-long friend Sr. Katie Norris.

home, he returned to Sarah Fisher Home.

As Bern's kids grew and moved on, some stayed in contact. Bern has attended his wards' graduations, marriages, baptisms of their children -- and then his grandkids' graduations and marriages.

The friars were also experimenting with the formation of us kids, now young adults. Bern and I were in the first class of a two-year novitiate. As part of the new Novitiate program, Bern got to go back to SFS and teach for 3 months. It was one of his most fulfilling experiences. Bern eventually left during 2nd year and pursued his life-long dream of traveling and studying theology in Europe. He spent a year at U. of

Bern was asked to serve on the SVSF Advisory Board in 1988. He soon became the Board Chair, and then orchestrated a merger of the Advisory Board with the Board of Trustees. He currently is Vice Chair of the Board. They oversaw the move of Sarah Fisher from the suburbs to inner city Detroit. St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center now have four separate inner city campuses offering "educational programs, basic skill building and



## 2024 Humanitarian Award: Jerry Kaelin '69



### Humanitarian Award presented to Jerry Kaelin by Bern Schwartz '69

I am honored to present Jerry Kaelin with the 2024 FAA Humanitarian Award.

As a fellow member of the class of '69, I've known Jerry for almost 60 years, when Jerry started his Franciscan life as a freshman at St. Francis Seminary in 1965.

I have to say, Jerry didn't come alone. His family came with him. His mother and father, Mary (Mayree) and Jim Kaelin were part of this institution, present at many of the gatherings and members of the Franciscan Seminary Seraphic Society. Then came Steve, his younger brother who joined a few years later. And finally, Dode his younger sister, who didn't 'join' the seminary, but

she did join the seminary family. Sadly, we lost his brother Steve in 2007.

Jerry touched many lives, starting with alumni here. OK, so maybe he didn't shape your life, but he did shape your hair, since Jerry's job at St. Francis Seminar was being the barber. Yes, we all had jobs and assignments, and Jerry's was being a barber. Being the kind soul that he is, I'm sure he'll be glad to give you a free haircut, for those who have hair.

Jerry was a sports fanatic. Both in watching sports and playing sports. He was on the Basketball team, the Tennis Team ... and any other ad hoc games we played. He loved sports so much that he was one of those that

would sneak out of the dormitory at night to watch a game in the senior lounge, even when he wasn't a senior. Fortunately for Jerry, I share this after Fr. Ric's retirement as disciplinarian.

Jerry went on to Duns Scotus College. This was during the Vietnam War era, and Jerry became passionate about politics, partly because of Fr. Gil's 'Current Events' class in high school. He coordinated a trip to Washington with some of his classmates to participate in the 1971 May Day protest in Washington against the Vietnam War.

Another time, Jerry orchestrated a march and sit-in against Honeywell, a mile down the road from Duns Scotus, when we learned

Honeywell was making Fragmentation Bombs for the Vietnam War. These bombs were designed to maim many people surrounding the bomb blast. True to his character, Jerry has always acted on his beliefs and convictions.

Jerry was in Novitiate 1972 – 1974, and started St. Leonard’s in 1974.

In 1979, Jerry was ordained. His first assignment was at St. Boniface in Lafayette, IN. Shortly after, he was given the assignment as Vocation Director for St. John the Baptist Province working with prospects. He always talks about the ‘candidates’ he did not allow to join the Franciscan Order. I think we have a lot to thank Jerry for, and this should truly be one of them.

After many years as Vocation Director, he was assigned to the formation house in Chicago.

In 1993 Jerry left the Order and started his lifelong commitment to the hospital chaplaincy mission, providing spiritual care to so many in need. As a hospital Chaplain, he touched many lives, day in and day out.

He offered spiritual and emotional guidance to patients and their families, especially those families dealing with the loss of a loved one. He sometimes offered sup-

port to doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals as well.

Jerry was perfect for this role because of his compassion and his ability to sense and respond to the range of emotions expressed by patients and families during these challenging times.

Because of his passion and personal conviction, he moved up from receiving this Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) certification to being a CPE Educator. He began teaching others how to minister to patients. In doing so, Jerry expanded his reach from one-on-one contact to teaching many future chaplains via the CPE program. Ultimately, Jerry became ACPE (Association of Clinical Pastor Education) Supervisor at Loyola University Medical Center in Chicago.

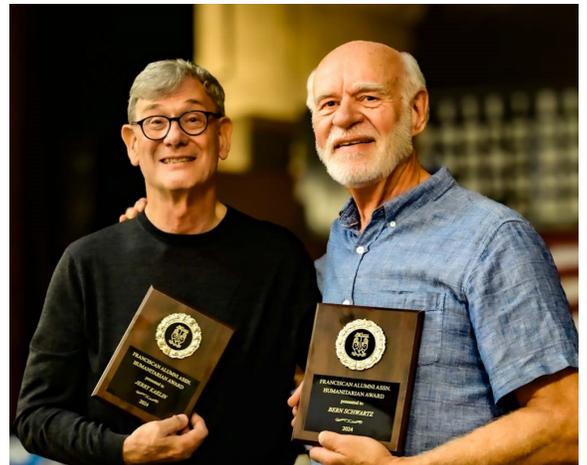
In 1997 Jerry married Fran Langdon, a medical doctor who also cares for and touches so many lives. Together they formed a special bond helping and healing people, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Today, Jerry is still touching lives. Not just those in the hospital system, but

still those he bonded with 55 years ago. Jerry was always a community driven person. He was the glue to the Class of ’69, whether it was reaching out to individuals, or planning trips to the Southwest with the Midwestern classmates so they could visit Southwest classmates, or orchestrating adventures to the top of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park. Jerry was the one who brought us all together.

Little did we know, 50 years ago, Fr. Leander saw what we see today, when he designated Jerry as a Fine Christian Gentleman in his senior year at Duns Scotus College.

So, Jerry, it is an honor to once again re-declare you a Fine Christian Gentleman. You have truly lived the life of Christ.



## 2024 Christian Life Award: Fr. Robert Seay, OFM '52



Christian Life Award presented to Fr. Robert Seay by Fr. Max Langenderfer, OFM '64

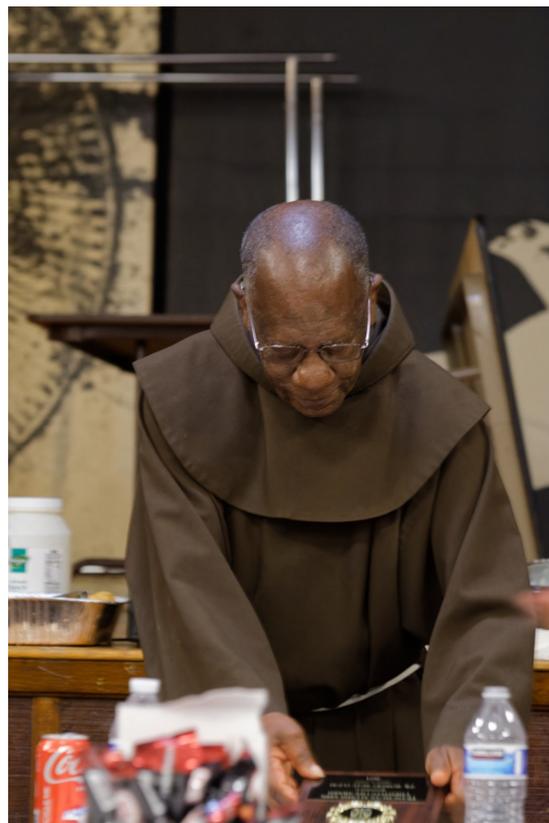
### ***Fr. Larry Dunham, OFM '65 interviewed Fr. Robert and prepared the following bio:***

Fr. Robert was born in 1934 in the little town of Iuka, Mississippi and later raised in Lima, Ohio. In addition to pride in his African American heritage, Fr. Robert is also proud to be of Chickasaw descent, a Native American Tribe in Mississippi. In 1959, feeling called to Franciscan life, he entered St. Joseph Brothers School in Oldenburg, Indiana. Following his solemn profession in 1966, he was assigned to Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he served for six years.

In 1972, Robert began studies for the priesthood at St. John XXIII

Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 1976. After ordination, he was assigned as associate for four years to a Black parish in Memphis, Tennessee, whose pastor was Fr. Jim Lyke, OFM, later to become Archbishop of Atlanta. Jim Lyke was a great mentor to Fr. Robert in African American ministry during those years.

In 1980, Fr. Robert was assigned to St. Leo Church in Boston where he also worked in urban affairs and in inculturation of the many diverse neighborhood cultures. Three years later he was named pastor of Our Lady of Charity, a Franciscan parish in Brooklyn, New





York. He says these were momentous years, both in his life and in the life of New York City. He became involved in politics and worked closely with many prominent civil rights activists, such as Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, to confront racism in all its forms. After the infamous Howard Beach hate crime in late

1986, he walked the streets of Brooklyn with Mayor Ed Koch to help quell the riots and bring peace back to the neighborhood. Fr. Robert strove tirelessly in those years to be a Franciscan peacemaker, a Franciscan charisma he exemplifies to this day.

In 1996, he joined the parish team at St. Mary of the Angels, a Black Franciscan parish in the poorest part of New Orleans, where he served for four years. In 2000, he began a long assignment to St. Paul Parish, an African American Franciscan community in Lafayette, Louisiana. As pastor, he labored mightily to break down barriers between the different cultures of Lafayette. He saw his parish school (which also served two other parishes) as part of that work – bringing peoples of different backgrounds and cultures together. To that end, he dramatically reversed the decline in enrollment. Following many years in Lafayette, Fr. Robert came to Houston with another friar to

minister in African American ministry while living, of all places, in China Town. Here, he became acquainted with both the Chinese and Vietnamese communities. He says he learned great chop stick skills in those years.

Finally, Fr. Robert came to Cincinnati to retire, but not to cease his efforts at being a Franciscan bridge builder and Franciscan peacemaker. Looking back over his life the other day, he mused: “I have now come to know that the Lord has always put me where he wants me.”



## 2024 Reunion Experience: The Nature of Healing

Michael Niehaus, Fr. Robert Seay, OFM, Frank Lopez, Brother John Boissy, OFM, and Dr. Matthew Sleeth, MD led reunion attendees in the program, "Franciscan Spirituality: The Nature of Healing." Frank guided participants in reciprocal breathing and talked about how trees and forests heal people by releasing aerosols into the atmosphere that reduce blood pressure, kill cancer cells, improve mental clarity, and provide many ingredients for medicines.

Mike Niehaus, who is an ISA Certified Arborist, described how he uses a tool called an air knife to remove excess soil from the base of a tree to reveal circling roots that girdle good roots. He guided several participants to heal trees by pruning girdling roots, which cut off food and water flow. Frank Lopez talked about how healthy trees can heal other stressed trees by providing food through root grafts and fungus "roots."

Dr. Matthew Sleeth spoke of the "trail of trees" in the bible from Genesis to Revelation that leads people back to God's goodness and faithfulness, to draw us back to paradise, "The state of being Full of Grace" with the Creator, and the creation that God gave us to be intricate stewards.

Brother John Boissy, OFM, who leads a new movement in woodworking at St Anthony Shrine, said that he was excited to be a part of this "healing in the land process" through the story of what the trees tell us both internally and externally.

Fr. Robert Seay, OFM led a healing service where he invited attendees to come forward as he prayed and laid hands on them. Afterward, a participant remarked that they felt the presence of God and didn't want to leave.



## Class of '74 Celebrates 50th *by Mike Thomas*

Together with the Franciscan Alumni reunion, the Class of 1974 gathered in Cincinnati to celebrate our 50th graduation anniversary. The class picture taken in late August 1970 on the front steps of St. Francis Seminary shows we were 31 strong. By the time June 9, 1974 arrived, our number had dropped to 10. The years have seen 4 of our classmates go home to be with the Lord. Thanks in large part to the super sleuthing of Pat Findley and Roger Kapraun and the technical expertise of Jim Lubinski and Jim Stewart, of the 27 living members of the Class of '74, 18 of us came together once again!

Some arrived Wednesday just to get an early start on what we anticipated would be an awesome weekend. Thursday brought more arrivals with the first scheduled event being the gathering of the Cincinnati area Franciscan community for the *Transitus*. This was the beginning of the excitement as many of us were seeing each other for the first time, in some cases, 50+ years!

On Friday evening, Ron and Katie Pio hosted a grand party at their home for the class (below).

Not only was the food delicious and plentiful, but being together with wives along was great. Thanks to Mike Niklas for having class photos from the Brown and White blown up into poster size for us to look at and laugh at. Jim Lubinski set up a MS Teams meeting so those who couldn't attend in person could still participate. A great time was had by all!

Saturday was a beautiful day for lunch outside at the Wiedemann Brewery in St. Bernard. The Wiedemann Brewery is a scant two blocks from St. Mary's Cemetery where the Friars bury their Brothers. Several of us went to visit our mentors, teachers, and buddies who have gone before us. It was a reverent and touching visit.

The Class of '74 continues to stay together. Jim Lubinski organizes Teams gatherings online a few times each year. Periodic check-ins by phone and e-mail are frequent. We were part of something special that left its mark on us all. That is why 18 of 27 guys came together in October 2024 and why we always look forward to reconnecting with each other.



Class of '74, standing: Roger Kapraun, Gregg Martinez, Kevin Fogarty, Ron Pio, Mike Thomas, Karl Pensak  
Seated: Phil Fluegemann, Pat Findley, Ken Wallen, Steve Duke, Joe Schutte; also in attendance: Jim Stewart

Mike Thomas, IT master

**Franciscan Alumni Association**

c/o St. Anthony Friary  
5000 Colerain Ave.  
Cincinnati, OH 45223

*www.franciscan-alumni.org*



**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



RSVP for the 2025 Franciscan Alumni Reunion by sending email to [2025Reunion@franciscan-alumni.org](mailto:2025Reunion@franciscan-alumni.org) and please indicate the reunion activities in which you intend to participate:

- Thursday dinner at Black Sheep Public House
- Friday morning group activity (several options)
- Friday afternoon group activity (several options)
- Friday evening Transitus at Corpus Christi Church
- Saturday morning discussion & prayer, SFS chapel
- Saturday lunch in Study Hall \$10
- Saturday afternoon help Garden Guild at old SFS
- Saturday 6 pm dinner in Study Hall \$25

**We're not asking for a firm commitment at this time, but your email response will help by providing approximate numbers for planning.**

**You will be able to see reunion plan updates at [www.franciscan-alumni.org/reunions](http://www.franciscan-alumni.org/reunions)**

The Franciscan Alumni Association newsletter is mailed to approximately 1,200 members for whom we have addresses. The only cost of production is the expense of printing and mailing. Additional stories and photos are available on the website. Thank you for your interest and support!

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