

LIBERATED waiting messengers WITNESSES
DREAMERS SEARCHING
REJOICE TRANSFORMED
FOUND TOUCHED DISCIPLES SERVANTS
FAITHFUL NEIGHBORS PROPHETS RESTLESS

RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE
2014 ANNUAL REPORT



mission statement

The Religious Formation Conference fosters and serves initial and lifelong formation for members of religious congregations of women and men.

our context and vision

Impelled by God's prophetic Spirit, rooted in the Gospel, and responsive to the mission of Jesus, we will proclaim the Reign of God by our life and mission.

Informed by our Catholic tradition and attentive to the signs of our times, we move forward grounded in a contemplative stance, the exercise of communal discernment, a growing appreciation of the interdependence of all life, and solidarity with those living in poverty and on the margins.

The Word Cloud on the cover of the 2014 Annual Report draws on a selection of nouns, adjectives, and verbs Pope Francis has used when speaking of or addressing vowed religious. Some are quite familiar; others are new and perhaps startling. The Religious Formation Conference commissioned CEDC to design the Word Cloud in celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life. Pope Francis' words to religious will keep the mission of the Conference before us in a fresh way as the Year unfolds.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE...

is an occasion for the Conference to review its stewardship of the resources with which its members and its benefactors have blessed it. An expression of accountability to them, it also carries the Conference's gratitude for the confidence they have placed in it and for their generosity in its supporting its mission.

In this spirit of accountability and gratitude, we are pleased to offer the Conference's 2014 Annual Report.



2014 at THE RFC

It is difficult to identify “Highlights of 2014” for the Religious Formation Conference. Indeed, the year 2014 was itself a highlight in the history and on-going life of the Conference, for it was our 60th anniversary year.

The nautilus which graced the Conference’s 2013 Annual Report accompanied the Conference throughout its anniversary year. An ancient sea creature, the nautilus continually builds the shell in which it lives, creating a new chamber as it grows, leaving the chamber which last sheltered it, but still drawing on the gas contained in vacated chambers to stay afloat: an apt image for the Religious Formation Conference, which for sixty years has created new chambers for vowed religious life in the United States and beyond, continuing to draw on its past even as it moves forward.

During this anniversary year, the Conference looked back in gratitude, rejoiced in the present moment, and anticipated a future as blessed as its past has been.

Five celebratory gatherings held across the country, in Albany, NY, Chicago, IL, Atchison,

KS, Seattle, WA, and San Antonio, TX, brought together almost 350 men and women religious, most U. S. born, others new arrivals here, from a range of congregations and ethnic backgrounds, seasoned members and jubilarians as well as novices and candidates. A DVD of the gatherings further extended the number of “participants.” Presenters at all five gatherings, Richard Gaillardetz, Ph.D., from Boston College and Caroljean Willie, SC, Ph.D., at the time the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Representative at the United Nations, explored with participants the theme *From Center to Periphery: Relocating the Prophetic Witness of Religious Life*.

This theme carried forward that of the 2013 National Congress, *Rooted in the Mission of Jesus: Reaching Out to the Margins*, and reflected Pope Francis’ expectation of vowed religious: “... come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries” (Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People, November 24, 2014).

“IN HER POEM ‘MYSTERIES, YES’, MARY OLIVER WRITES: LET ME KEEP COMPANY WITH THOSE WHO SAY ‘LOOK!’ AND LAUGH IN ASTONISHMENT, AND BOW THEIR HEADS.

RFC IS FOR ME BEING IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS WHO LOOK DEEPLY, WHO ARE OPEN TO ASTONISHMENT, AND WHO, IN THE FACE OF THIS MYSTERY, BOW THEIR HEADS.”

Margaret Fitzer, SSL, RFC Executive Director, 1990-95



Richard Gaillardetz, Ph.D



Participants in table conversation, San Antonio, TX



Group of novices at Atchison, KS



Caroljean Willie, SC, Ph.D



Ruth McGoldrick, SP, RFC
Executive Director, 1973-76



Anniversary banquet, Albany, NY

ON-GOING PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Honoring its beginnings in the service of those engaged in initial formation for religious life and mission, the Conference offered its three signature programs in 2014: *ForMission*, *Orientation to Formation*, and the *Life Commitment Program*.

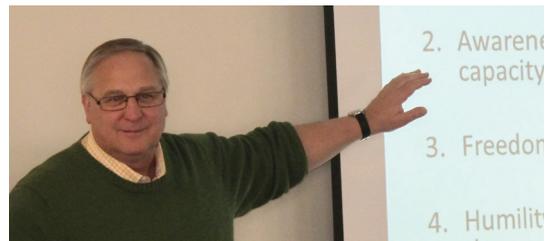
ForMission, an intensive formation program for those preparing for or engaged in either initial or lifelong formation ministry within their religious congregations, extends over two years. Two week-long residential sessions each year feature outstanding, nationally and internationally known presenters. A particular strength of the program is the work participants engage in between residential sessions. These include peer supervision with religious of other congregations and the formation of a reading and study group with members of their own congregations. The latter highlights the Conference's belief that formation is everyone's responsibility and contributes to the lifelong formation of members of the reading/study group. Two sessions of *ForMission* were held in 2014, one at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX, the other at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL. Eighteen religious participated in *ForMission* in 2014, with six completing the program.



Recent *ForMission* graduates

A briefer, more tightly focused program, ***Orientation to Formation***, is offered annually. Led by Ray Dlugos, OSA, and Maria Hughes, ASC, and held in Willimantic, CT, *Orientation*

to Formation attracted 22 participants in 2014, who explored the theme of formation as a "work of grace." Because each year's *Orientation to Formation* has a particular focus, it is appropriate for new and seasoned formation ministers and leadership liaisons to formation as well as for those who have participated in a previous *Orientation to Formation* weekend.



Ray Dlugos, OSA

The ***Life Commitment Program*** welcomes women and men religious on the cusp of perpetual profession. Offered in 2014 at the Bergamo Center in Dayton, OH, it brought together an international group of eleven newer religious for a week of input, personal and communal prayer and reflection, and periods of relaxation. The *Life Commitment Program* is the oldest of the Conference's regular program offering, initiated in 1984. Because of the changing demographics of religious congregations, it will be offered biennially after 2015. This decision was made with the best interests of future participants at heart. At this sacred season of their lives, it is imperative that women and men preparing for final commitment be supported and enriched by a community of peers in religious life.

Webinars have become an important vehicle for offering lifelong formation to members of the Religious Formation Conference. Seven webinars, including one in Spanish, were offered in 2014 on a range of topics. On average, webinars attracted

280 participants; quite specialized webinars, such as one on the basics of immigration law for members of religious congregations, drew smaller audiences, while those on topics of more general interest, for example, *Religious Life in an Evolving World* or *Saying "Yes" to the Call of Aging*, attracted larger audiences, with the latter engaging 650 participants. As a service to all religious, webinars are free on the day they are offered, then archived to the Members section of the RFC website for later viewing/reviewing by RFC members.



RFC staff preparing for a webinar

Other on-going services of the Conference include the electronic publication of its quarterly bulletin *InFormation* which includes a lead article of interest to formation and leadership personnel and general congregation membership, materials and listing of events of particular interest to formators, book and/or film reviews. Members of the national office staff are available for consultation by phone, email, or in person. The Conference website is updated regularly.

Hub events such as those offered in celebration of the Conference's 60th anniversary year express the RFC's commitment to fostering lifelong formation. A new series of hub events will unfold during Year of Consecrated Life, which began as 2014 was drawing to its close.

A review of **2014 at the Religious Formation Conference** would be incomplete if two significant events were not mentioned: the completion of the ministry of Sister Violet Grennan, mfc, as Executive Director of the Conference and the award of the second installment of a capacity building grant first given in 2013.

The latter, a generous grant by foundation which prefers to remain anonymous, enabled the move to increased office space in 2013, the hiring of an Associate Director, and the enhancement of the Conference technological capacity. The second installment of the grant in 2014 was in large part responsible for the Conference's enhanced technological outreach to RFC member congregations and other religious.

The Conference honored Sister Violet at the completion of her ministry with it at a reception in August 2014 to which friends, benefactors, our partnering organizations, and colleagues in the Hecker Center, where the national office is located, were invited.

We thank Sister Violet for her passionate engagement with the Conference over seven years and the foundation for the confidence in the Conference which its generous grant represents.



Staff at Sister Violet's reception

NATIONAL BOARD & COMMITTEES

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

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Carol Regan, SUSC, *ex-officio** (from 9/1/14)

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"MY TIME ON THE RFC BOARD HAS BEEN A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT AND SHARE THOUGHTS AND IDEAS ABOUT RELIGIOUS LIFE. IT IS INSPIRING AND ENCOURAGING TO WORK WITH VOCATION AND FORMATION MINISTERS TOWARD A RELIGIOUS LIFE RELEVANT AND MEANINGFUL IN OUR SOCIETY."

Raul Salas, OMI, Board member since January 2011

"SERVICE ON THE BOARD HAS ALLOWED ME TO CONNECT WITH WOMEN AND MEN WHO ARE DEDICATED TO THOSE IN OUR INITIAL FORMATION PROGRAMS AS WELL AS PROVIDING CONTINUAL FORMATION FOR SEASONED RELIGIOUS. I AM REJUVENATED AND ENERGIZED TO SERVE THIS CONFERENCE AND TO ENSURE A CONTINUANCE OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT REACH OUT TO ALL MEMBERS OF OUR CONGREGATIONS."

Kathleen Goike, IWBS, Board member since January 2014

CONGRESS 2015 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Elaine Davia, CBS
Yvonne DeBruin
Violet Grennan, mfc (through 8/31/14)
Joye Gros, OP
Karen Hawkins, SP
Katherine Kandefer, BVM
Carol Regan, SUSC

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Fintan Sheeran, SS.CC.
Loughlin Sofield, ST

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE RFC

COLLABORATING GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS

Collaboration is a value the Religious Formation Conference prizes highly. Indeed, our “ancestor” the Sister Formation Conference was perhaps the first national organization in the United States to bring together members of diverse religious congregations in a common mission. That heritage informs the mission of the Conference to this day.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

In 2014, nearly 200 religious congregations (or units such as provinces or monasteries) held membership in the Religious Formation Conference. These included congregations of men and of women and reflected the rich and diverse expressions of vowed religious life.

Because we hold that when a congregation (or a specific unit) joins the RFC, all its members belong to the Conference, we can only begin to estimate the total number of religious engaged with the RFC. This we do know: The Religious Formation Conference is composed of women and men religious committed to and engaged with initial and lifelong formation for religious life and mission. The Conference has been enriched by the participation of formators, leadership personnel, vocation directors, seasoned religious and newer members, candidates, novices, and religious in first profession, in the various programs and services it offers.



The Leadership Development Collaborative

COLLABORATING GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS

We are honored to collaborate with the following organizations for the flourishing of vowed religious life:

- The Brothers Think Tank
- The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)
- The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)
- Giving Voice (GV)
- The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)
- The Leadership Development Collaborative
- The National Conference of Vicars for Religious (NCVR)
- The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO)
- The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC)
- The North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR)
- The Religious Brothers Conference (RBC)
- The Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI)

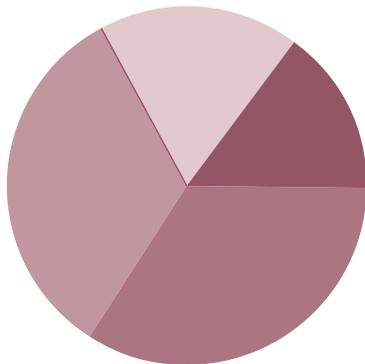
2014 Finances

Income

Dues	\$201,730
Programs, Workshops & Resources	\$191,573
Miscellaneous	\$1200
Net Gains on Investments	\$106,941
Net Assets released from restriction	\$87,472
Total Revenue and Gains	\$588,916

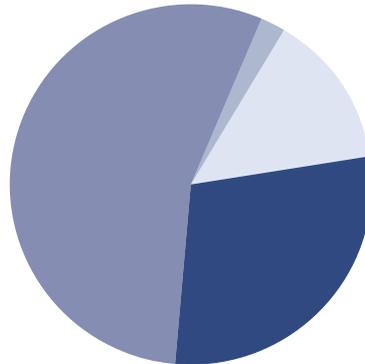
Expenses

Administration	\$77,922
National Board	\$9,815
National Office	\$305,739
Programs and Workshops	\$163,034
Total Expenses	\$556,510
Net Revenue	\$32,406



Income

- Dues
- Miscellaneous
- Net Gains on Investments
- Donations & Grants
- Programs, Workshops Resources



Expenses

- Administration
- National Board
- National Office
- Programs & Workshops

CONTRIBUTORS 2014

In addition to members of its Board of Directors, various committees and sub-committees, and Advisory Council, all of whom contribute generously of their time, talent, and expertise, the Religious Formation Conference is blessed in the support of its many benefactors.

We acknowledge here the financial gifts and grants and in-kind contributions offered by our benefactor for the period January 1, 2014-December 31, 2014. If by error, we have not acknowledged a contribution, please inform us, so that we can rectify our mistake in our 2015 Annual Report.

WE OFFER OUR THANKS TO ...

Adorers of the Blood of Christ, St. Louis, MO*	Region 5, The Religious Formation Conference	Sisters of Saint Benedict, Crookston, MN*
Anonymous Foundation: Capacity Building Grant	School Sisters of St. Francis, Pittsburgh, PA*	Sisters of Saint Casimir, Chicago, IL
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Providence Health and Services, Renton, WA	Sisters of the Resurrection, Chicago, IL*	
Region 3, The Religious Formation Conference	Sisters of Saint Basil the Great, Uniontown, PA	

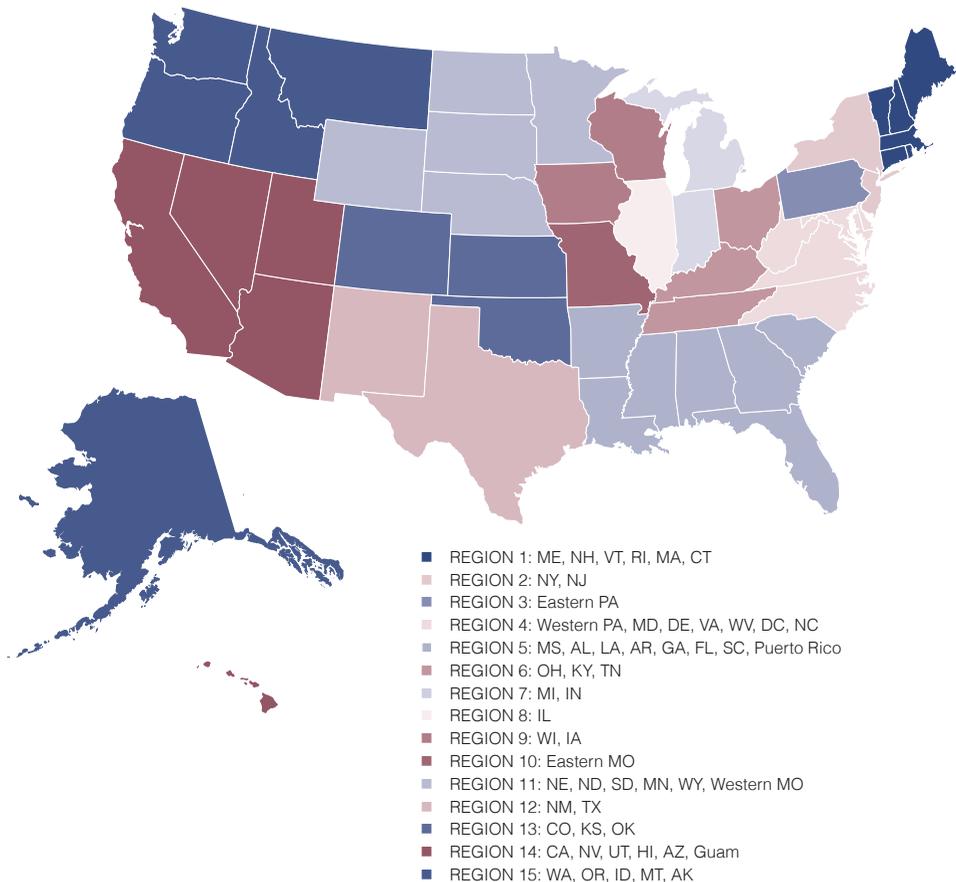
**Donors to the 60th Anniversary Events*

RFC REGIONS 2014

Although it is itself a national organization, the Religious Formation Conference is organized into geographic regions. The number of regions and each's region's territory is determined by the Conference's Board of Directors.

Regions organize programs and gatherings appropriate to their local needs; these may include peer supervision groups for formators, inter-congregational pre-novitiate and/or novitiate programs, workshops or other sessions focused

on lifelong formation. Regional activities create space for formators to network, for newer members to interact with their peers across congregational boundaries, for seasoned religious to be renewed and refreshed for their ongoing engagement in their congregations' life and mission. In addition, regions host and support hub events sponsored by the RFC national office on topics related to initial and lifelong formation.



LOOKING ahead ...

Even before 2014, the 60th Anniversary Year for the Religious Formation Conference, had ended, a new season of celebration was upon us, the Year of Consecrated Life announced by Pope Francis.

2015 will be a year of special blessing and promise for the Religious Formation Conference.

We will celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life by offering four hub workshops focused on Hope: An Invitation and Impetus to Transformative Life and Mission.

We will celebrate the Conference's 19th Biennial National Congress in Pittsburgh, November 5-7, 2015. Drawn from Pope Francis' words to religious, our Conference theme *Rejoice! God's Tomorrow Beckons*, reflects that future full of hope which is God's perennial promise.

We will celebrate Advent Days of Reflection and Renewal in collaboration with the National Religious Vocation Conference in December 2015.

And as 2015 comes to a close, we will welcome a new Executive Director:
Sister Ellen Dauwer, SC.

Through these special activities and in daily service, the Board of Directors, the national office staff, and the members of the Religious Formation Conference will carry forward its mission: to foster and serve initial and lifelong formation for members of religious congregations of women and men. To be called to this commitment is both challenge and blessing.



Region 10 novices celebrate a First Profession



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