



RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

constellations of light

our mission

The Religious Formation Conference educates and strengthens formators in their ministry of formation. The RFC engages religious communities with timely resources, services, and experiences that support initial and ongoing formation, that are responsive to an emerging future, in prophetic witness to Gospel values through personal and communal transformation.

our vision

The Religious Formation Conference will engage women and men religious in a variety of vibrant resources, services, and experiences that bring our rich religious heritage into interaction with the contemporary and cultural realities of our world by:

- Promoting open, contemplative and collaborative dialogue;
- Modeling and encouraging inclusivity and respect for diversity;
- Welcoming inter-generational and inter-cultural viewpoints; and
- Responding to God's ongoing invitation to the "new" of religious life.

from the executive director



“As humans we are drawn to light and to the Light. It was the first act of creation.”

Holy Saturday this year was a rather grey and cloudy day. I joined our Sisters and other residents and families at our Villa (residence for our retired Sisters) to celebrate the Easter Vigil, which was held in the late afternoon for pastoral reasons. As the presider lit the Easter candle from the fire and began to process down the aisle with it, the sun emerged from the clouds and filled the chapel with light! There was no need to illuminate the chapel with electric lights as the sun was perfectly synchronized with the liturgy. Later in his homily, the celebrant commented on God’s wonderful sense of humor! (I would add the adjective “dramatic”!)

As humans we are drawn to light and to the Light. It was the first act of creation. Most life cannot be sustained without the light of the sun. It literally and figuratively energizes us. We are also attracted to a bright smile, the sparkle of an eye, and the radiance of grace in another.

The Religious Formation Conference has been a source of light and life to many throughout this past

year. Participants in the Life Commitment Program in July stirred the flame of hope within many through the video they produced at the conclusion of their week together. In a similar way the ForMission cohorts who gather for an intensive week of input, process, prayer, and fun light the way for each other as well as their communities as they help to prepare the next generation of religious women and men.

The Together program was launched as a pilot this year, through the support of the GHR Foundation and in collaboration with Catholic Theological Union. The first group of participants, supported by Coordinator Karina Conrad, CDP, has shone a new light on the triad program goals: theological study, community, and ongoing formation.

New to the RFC staff this year, in addition to Karina Conrad, CDP, is Associate Director Ryan Hoffmann, who has brought the light of creativity and insight into his work in communication, membership, and Congress planning. He has opened the door more fully

into the world of social media, thus sharing the mission of the Conference far beyond its usual environs.

All of our work throughout the year has been led by the RFC Plan 2017-2020. The Board and the staff consistently collaborate to ensure that this plan is both a living document and a guiding light for the Conference.

In this “looking back” on the year, I want to express deep gratitude to both the RFC Board and the RFC staff. The accomplishments described in this report are a reality because of the energy, dedication, and commitment they devote to the mission of the Conference each and every day.

In these days of increasing light, when daylight arrives earlier each morning and lingers a bit longer each evening, let us give thanks, too, to the source of our life: the Risen Lord who is the Way, the Truth, and the Light.

Ellen Dauwer, SC

Ellen Dauwer, SC
Executive Director

constellations of light

AN OVERVIEW OF 2018 AT THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

There were many bursts of energy, light and life for the RFC in 2018. We are grateful for all the ways God blessed us with gifts of talent, treasure, and time. A few highlights of this past year include:



In January 2018, **Ryan Hoffmann** assumed the position of Associate Director. Ryan has worked tirelessly to update the Conference's communications strategy and infrastructure and cultivate a more robust membership and engagement plan. His social media ministry, in particular, has led to a marked increase in RFC's reach and visibility. Ryan enjoys shining a bright light on the hope and joy alive in religious life today!

The Conference continues to be blessed by the many **connections and collaborations** of light that are enabled by our location at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago. This close proximity with Catholic scholarship, leadership and ministry has strengthened our work with key partners. We are pleased to journey with the following with the following organizations operating at CTU: Center for the Study of



Consecrated Life (CSCL), Institute of Religious Formation (IRF), Giving Voice (GV), Communicators for Women Religious (CWR) and National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC)

Additionally, the rays of light extend well beyond CTU and our Chicago home. The numerous collaborating groups and organizations with whom the RFC has the privilege to partner are listed later in this report. In concert with so many others, the RFC illuminates the diverse responses of religious life taking shape in the church. Together, we embody the emerging now of communities in service to God's people.

RFC's **2017-2020 strategic plan** continues to guide the organization's mission forward. Significant accomplishments included the launch of the *Together* program, exploration of how technology can complement RFC programming, revision and expansion of RFC membership opportunities, concretization of paths of collaboration with the North American Conference



of Associates and Religious (NACAR), and formation of the groundwork to revitalize the Conference's regional structure. Late in the year, the RFC unveiled the **2019 Congress theme and imagery** (Being Signs of Courageous Hope) and announced its keynote speakers: Sister Norma Pimental and Father Bryan Massingale.

Another significant moment for the RFC was launching an official Twitter page in 2018. **We've tweeted over 1,085 times and amassed over 400 followers and 1,860 likes!** This social media presence allows the RFC to share the good news of the Conference with friends on a more regular and timely basis. From inspirational reflections to Catholic news to updates from the RFC, our Twitter page beams brightly on the organizational mission. If you haven't already, be sure to check it out: twitter.com/reforcon

Finally, the RFC was grateful for a very positive response to the 2018 Annual Appeal which funded the **Sister Mary Daniel,**



SNDdeN Scholarship Fund. This fund supports women and men religious whose congregations are members of the RFC and who demonstrate a need for financial assistance with program costs. The investment communities made to assist those with financial need to participate in RFC's transformative programming was inspiring!

program offerings and services



ForMission

A theory/content and skills development program for vowed religious women and men who are new to or preparing for formation ministry, **ForMission 2018** engaged 29 participants from three distinct cohorts, representing 24 congregations and 9 countries of origin. ForMission met for two residential sessions, one in January at Mercy Center, Burlingame, CA and the other in May-June at Catholic Theological Union. The theme of the January session was *Formation for Religious Life* and the May-June session focused on *Mission and Religious Life in the 21st Century*.

Each residential session brought ForMission participants into dialogue with presenter/practitioner experts in the fields of theology, scripture, culture/interculturality, and spirituality. Each residential immersion included 1-2 days of skill development and praxis. As a peer learning community, participants supported and challenged one another by sharing experiences, offering insights, affirming personal growth, and inviting each other into deeper levels of personal transformation.



Orientation to Formation 2.5 DAYS WORKSHOP

Orientation to Formation 2018, *Walking the Unfolding Path: Accompanying those Discerning the Call to Religious Life*, was presented by Helen Cahill, OP, and Henry Beck, OFM, October 12-14, 2018 at Catholic Theological Union to 46 attendees from 23 congregations and provinces. Participants included vocation directors, formation directors, and leadership team liaisons to formation ministers.

Life Commitment Program

An 8-day experience for women and men religious discerning and/or anticipating the profession of final vows, the **Life Commitment Program** gathered 22 women and men in July 2018 at the Marillac Spirituality Center, Leavenworth, KS. Participants engaged with skilled and experienced presenters/practitioners on topics of the vows – poverty, celibacy, obedience – community and communal life and religious life as a prophetic enterprise in the 21st century. Participants shared their stories, hopes and challenges, with peers immersed in an atmosphere of prayer, conversation, silence, and fun.



“The workshop was live-streamed and video recorded in the presence of a live audience of 55 attendees.”



Webinars

The Conference offered **7 webinars** in 2018 embracing elements of both initial and ongoing formation:

- *The Spirituality of Holy Week* by Sallie Latkovich, CSJ, DMin, (March 21)
- 3-part webinar series co-sponsored with Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) presented by Jerry McGlone, SJ, PhD *Getting the Most out of a Psychological Assessment* Part one – Understanding the Basics (May 2); Part two – Dealing with Difficult Findings & Difficult Realities (May 16); Part three – Developing & Managing Inter-Cultural Competencies Within Formation (May 30)
- *A Conversation about the Vows* with Sarah Kohles, OSF, Juliet Mousseau, RCSJ, and Tracy Kemme, SC, co-editors and contributors to *In Our Own Words: Religious Life in a Changing World* (Sept 13)
- *Seeking Emmanuel in a World Immersed in Chaos* by Sister Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC (Dec 5).



RFC webinars regularly attract an international audience and are viewed by individuals and groups, with registration ranging from 100-300 participants. Webinars are archived for future (or repeat) viewing at no charge to RFC members and are available to others for a modest fee.

Workshops

One day workshop *Life Giving Community: Cultivating Communication, Connection & Compassion* was presented and facilitated by Kathy Galleher, PhD, Licensed Psychologist, October 27, 2018 in Renton, WA with the support of the Sisters of Providence. The workshop was live-streamed and video recorded in the presence of a live audience of 55 attendees. Access to the workshop, as recorded, is available on the RFC website for a modest fee.

Services and Publications

The RFC staff offer **consultations** by phone, email, or in-person to member congregations on matters pertaining to initial and lifelong formation.

Additionally, the Conference's **website** is updated regularly with new articles, reflections, webinar recordings and other resources for members. **InFormation**, RFC's quarterly bulletin, offers members in-depth coverage on important formation topics and practices.

The RFC's **Google group** (listserv) gives members opportunities to connect virtually around best practices, resources, and events. Finally, RFC's **NewsBlog** and presence on **Facebook** and **Twitter** offer followers regular and timely updates on Catholic happenings and RFC news.



together program

Religious sisters and brothers studying at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) have the opportunity to come together as a cohort to study theology, live in community, and engage in ongoing formation. The collaboration between CTU and RFC in establishing the *Together* program provides a strong theological foundation for new religious today.

This past year served as the pilot year of the program and was one of growth and learning. The RFC is happy to share that the *Together* program will continue to move forward in 2019-2020. The *Together* participants shape the program's trajectory in conjunction with a Visioning Committee, a local Formation Advisory Committee, and the Program Coordinator. These

stakeholders continue to work together to improve and develop *Together*.

The *Together* community meets every Thursday for Formation Night. It uses the model employed at CTU in which Thursday evenings are set aside for formation houses to gather locally for input, process, facilitation, theological reflection, interpersonal skills development for community living, intercultural capacity building, effective communication skills, and other integrative learning. In addition to formation nights, there are weekly community check-ins to strengthen the communal bonds among the participants. The *Together* community also gathers for shared meals, prayer, and social outings. The support



Karina Conrad, CDP, *Together* Program Coordinator, worked hard in 2018 to create a sacred space for *Together* participants.

for one another is strong as participants journey together living inter-congregationally and interculturally.

The *Together* Visioning Committee met January 7 and 8 for a mid-year update and to continue to implement the goals of the program. The Committee stressed the importance of the original

vision in guiding the future direction and program adaptations. Two of their main recommendations included to have only residential participants in the next cohort and to extend participation to newly finally professed members (within the past 5 years) who are willing to commit to the program's three components.

quotes from participants

"Faith comes from hearing the message and hearing the message comes through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). I quote this because I started my journey trusting God when I came to a new land and in new culture. As I began my classes at Catholic Theological Union, I was comfortable and felt at home. Joining the *Together* community has been a great help for me to get familiar with the place and people. Being in the community I experience the sense of belongingness and growing together as a community." - Sushma Bodra, SCN

“The program is hopeful that as the participants enthusiastically share their lived experiences of the Together community, more will come to know and value this unique cohort-based, residential theology program of study and formation.”

Another vital group to the development of the *Together* program is the local Formation Advisory Group. The members are experienced formators/spiritual directors and gather to advise on the formation component of *Together*.

An essential part of the pilot year was the assessment conducted by an outside evaluator. The evaluation conducted in November 2018 was the first of two developmental evaluation processes designed to ascertain the strengths of the pilot program and areas of improvement or adjustment in order to ensure the program fulfills its vision. The participants and Coordinator shared their wisdom, hopes and dreams for the future of the *Together* program. The second evaluation will be

conducted in May 2019. It will be a more comprehensive review and will include representatives from the sending communities, faculty/staff from CTU, *Together* participants, the Program Coordinator, and the staff of RFC.

The recruitment of future participants is ongoing. In January, the program hosted a virtual open house for those interested in participating in the *Together* program in 2019-2020. The open houses informed viewers of CTU’s academic programs and the key components of the *Together* program. Additionally, the Program Coordinator has worked with CTU enrollment/admissions office to recruit prospective participants. The program is hopeful that as the



participants enthusiastically share their lived experiences of the *Together* community, more will come to know and value this unique cohort-based, residential theology program of study and formation.



“Currently, I live in the inter-congregational *Together* collaborative at Catholic Theological Union. We recently vowed sisters share intentional community and formation experiences while studying graduate-level theology or ministry. I am away from my congregation, but I am surely at home. The beauty of it is that it is never a choice between my congregation and inter-congregational relationships. It is a both-and.” – Tracy Kemme, SC

rfc membership

The Membership of the Religious Formation Conference

In 2018, membership in the Conference remained strong. When a congregation, monastery, or a unit of a congregation such as a province or region joins the RFC, the Conference considers that all its vowed members belong and enjoy the privileges of RFC membership. Congregations holding membership in the Religious Formation Conference, their leadership, formation personnel, and all their vowed members are the Conference's primary collaborators, as all work together toward the transformation of religious life for the sake of mission to the world today.

Collaborating Groups and Organizations

The numerous constellations of light alive in religious life widened the RFC's circle of collaborating groups and organizations. We are grateful for those with whom we collaborated in 2018 and continue to do so today. The RFC always welcomes new possibilities for partnership and collaboration.

The RFC is grateful for the investment member communities and collaborators make toward cultivating formation opportunities for mission.

The Brothers Think Tank
The Catholic Health Association (CHA)
Catholic Theological Union (CTU) and its Formation Council
The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)
The Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (CSCL)
Communicators for Women Religious (CWR)
The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) and its Formation Committee
The Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR)
The GHR Foundation
Giving Voice (GV)
The Institute of Religious Formation (IRF)
The J. S. Paluch Company
The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and its Leadership Pathways Program
The Leadership Collaborative
The Mexican American Catholic College (MACC)
The National Association of Vocation/Formation Directors (NAVFD; Canada)
National Catholic Sisters Week (NCSW)
The National Conference of Vicars for Religious (NCVR)
The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO)
The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC)
The Religious Brothers Conference (RBC)
The Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI)
The USCCB: Office of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations

formation for mission

Significant financial support for the RFC comes from the membership dues paid by our primary collaborators in mission, those religious congregations, provinces, and other units belonging to the Conference. Many of them choose to assist the Conference in other ways as well: through financial donations, membership on the RFC Board, on standing or ad hoc committees, and the provision of in-kind, voluntary service to the Conference. In this they are joined by foundations, vendors, and others who support the mission of the Conference.

Congregations/Organizations

Adorers of the Blood of Christ	Little Company of Mary Sisters	Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati	Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
Brothers of Christian Schools	Marist Society	Sisters of Charity of Halifax	Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate
Congregation de Notre Dame – Blessed Sacrament Province	Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic	Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth	Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Congregation of Bon Secours	Mexican American Catholic College	Sisters of Charity of Nazareth	Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament
Congregation of Divine Providence	Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity	Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth	Sisters of the Precious Blood
Congregation of the Humility of Mary	Oblates of Mary Immaculate	Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Sisters of the Presentation – NY
Congregation of the Incarnate Word & Blessed Sacrament	Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters	Sisters of Christian Charity	Sisters of the Presentation – Dubuque
Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph - Brentwood	Paulist Fathers	Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Northeast Community	Sisters of the Presentation of the BVM
Daylesford Abbey	Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ	Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community	Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary
Dominican Sisters of Peace	Religious Formation Conference-Region 3	Sisters of Providence	Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary – Immaculata
Dominican Sisters of Springfield	Religious of Jesus and Mary	Sisters of Providence – Renton	Society of Jesus
Dominican Sisters-Grand Rapids	Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary	Sisters of St Joseph of Rochester	Society of St. Teresa of Jesus
Edmund Rice Christian Brothers	Sinsinawa Dominicans	Sisters of St. Francis – Dubuque	The Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
Franciscan Sisters of Mary	Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur	Sisters of St. Francis – Oldenburg, IN	The Premonstratensian Fathers (Norbertine)
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration	Sisters of the Society of the Precious Blood	Sisters of St. Francis – Philadelphia	Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph
Holy Union Sisters	Sister, Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus	Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania	
		Sisters of St. Francis Rochester MN	



“As a peer learning community, participants supported and challenged one another by sharing experiences, offering insights, affirming personal growth, and inviting each other into deeper levels of personal transformation.”

-Connie Schoen, OP on ForMission

rfe financials

2018 Income



2018 Expenses



national board and committees

Board Members

Adriana Calzada, CCVI
Nancy Gerth, SCN
Kathleen Goike, IWBS
Karen Hawkins, SP
Richard Hall, OMI
James B. Herring, O.Praem.
Mary Ann Nelson, OP
Anna Hang-Nga Nguyen, SCC
Elyse Marie Ramirez, OP
Corrina Thomas, FSPA
Kathleen Turley, RSM
Mary R Walsh, CSJ
Noreen Walter, SCL

Executive Committee

Kathleen Turley, RSM (Co-Chair)
Noreen Walter, SCL (Co-Chair)
Richard Hall, OMI (Secretary)
Mary Walsh, CSJ (Treasurer)
Ellen Dauwer, SC (ex officio)

Finance Committee

Mary Walsh, CSJ (Chair)
James Gaffney, FSC
Leora Linnenkugel, OLVM
Carol Regan, SUSC
Reneta Webb
Ellen Dauwer, SC (ex officio)
Ryan Hoffmann (ex officio)
Katherine Kandefer, BVM (staff)

Mary Emil Penet Award Committee

Mary Glackin, IHM
Corrina Thomas, FSPA

Board Governance Committee

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Richard Hall, OMI
James Herring, O.Praem.
Anna Hang-Nga Nguyen, SCC
Ellen Dauwer, SC (ex officio)

Congress 2019 Planning Committee

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Nancy Gerth, SCN (Co-Chair)
Marci Madary (NACAR Representative)
Mary Ann Nelson, OP
Elyse Marie Ramirez, OP
Corrina Thomas, FSPA
Ellen Dauwer, SC (staff)
Ryan Hoffmann (Co-Chair)
Kathy Kandefer, BVM (staff)
Connie Schoen, OP (staff)

Investment Sub-Committee

John M. Williams (Chair)
Michaela Huelbig
Kevin Keating (Investment Manager)
Christopher Strub Kelly





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the RFC illuminates the diverse
forms of religious life in the church today.
Together, they embody the emerging now
of communities in service
to God's people.*



ReligiousFormation
CONFERENCE

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