

RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE
2013 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 logo of the Religious Formation Conference was designed in 1991 by Madeleva Williams, CSJ (Orange, CA) and has been in use since summer 1992. The logo's open circle symbolizes giving and receiving insight and direction. The waves capture the dynamism and life that is the future; the Cross is ever a part of our journey.

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on this past year in the context of RFC's mission and vision, on the Conference's service to religious congregations of women and men for the church and for the world, what emerges is a deep sense of gratitude to our good and gracious God, our faithful and faith-filled members and the numerous committed lay and religious partners in mission with whom RFC collaborates.



2013 was, indeed, a very full year. Although more detail is given in the following pages of this Annual Report, I want to highlight this year's significant happenings. Among them was the successful completion of a ground-breaking three year series of programming titled: *Transformation of Religious Life in North America: An Action-Oriented Initiative*. Participants included general membership, formation personnel and elected leadership. These members benefited significantly from the generous support of this initiative by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, a second foundation and private donors. Findings from a study by CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) confirmed the inestimable value of this series to religious congregations at this critical time in the history of religious life, our church and world.

Additional successful programming included the Conference's ongoing *For Mission*, Life Commitment and Orientation to Formation programs, and the Congress 2013 titled *Rooted in the Mission of Jesus: Reaching Out to the Margins*, during which we launched the beginning of the 60th anniversary of the Religious Formation Conference. A series of nationwide programs to take place in 2014 was designed in 2013 to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Implementation in 2013 of a strategic operational plan, designed and developed in 2012, was made

possible through the financial support of a foundation that has been an RFC partner in mission for many years. This support and confidence on the part of the funding source enabled RFC to hire an additional staff person, move to a new national office location in Washington, DC and update significantly our technology for the sake of advancing RFC's mission and services to our members. Resulting from these program and capacity building initiatives is a revitalized national profile of RFC.

Adding to the joy and fullness of 2013 was news of the election of Pope Francis, the first pope from the Americas and from the Global South and the first Jesuit. His challenge and invitation to live the gospel joyfully resonates strongly with our call as disciples called and sent to live and proclaim the Gospel in today's world and church. RFC's mission and vision provides the context for our members and partners in mission to embrace this challenge.

In closing, I wish to highlight the image of the nautilus used on the front cover of this report and a symbol we will use throughout our 60th anniversary year. As it grows, a nautilus creates new chambers in which to live. This rich symbol captures for us the growth and expansion that has characterized the mission of the Religious Formation Conference in 2013 and, indeed, throughout the Conference's history.

I pray for God's continued blessings on all who contribute to the mission of the Conference.

With gratitude,

Violet Grennan, mfc

Sister Violet Grennan, mfc
Executive Director

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013

The Transformation of Religious Life in North America: An Action-Oriented Initiative

2013 saw the successful completion of this three year initiative, designed to deepen awareness of the current state of religious life in North America and to train participants in skills they could employ to facilitate the transformation of their congregations. Funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in its second and third years, the Transformation series unfolded in five hub locations annually and attracted some four hundred religious each year. Participants in the series included women and men from the general membership of their congregations as well as formation and vocation personnel and elected leaders.

After the completion of the series, the RFC Advisory Council and National Office Staff prepared a *Facilitator Guide* to serve as a resource for those engaged in the on-going work of transformation in their congregations. The *Guide* draws on materials presented in the Transformation series and offers readings, questions and processes to promote personal and communal reflection, prayer experiences, and tools to measure progress toward goals. It is available for purchase at the RFC National Office.

As a final step in the Transformation initiative, the RFC commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to survey participants to evaluate their experience of the workshops and their impact on the participants themselves as well as on their congregations. The survey showed that participants found the workshops a positive experience which offered them processes for engaging in conversations within their congregations about the future of religious life and skills for communal discernment and noted a greater empowerment for mission.

Capacity-Building Grant

In 2013, the Religious Formation Conference was awarded a three-year capacity-building grant by a foundation which has asked to remain anonymous. The grant was offered to cover three clear Conference needs: increased space, additional staff, and enhanced technological capacity.

- After an extensive search, the National Office moved in early September 2013 to the Hecker Center for Ministry on the grounds of the Paulist College in Washington, DC. This new location, which houses several other church-related organizations, gives the Conference the space it requires as well as a wealth of colleagues and companions in ministry.
- Also in September 2013, Carol Regan, SUSC, joined the National Office staff as Associate Director of the Conference. Sister Carol comes to the Conference after having recently completed twelve years as the leader of her international congregation, the Holy Union Sisters.
- And finally, thanks to the grant, the RFC has been able to upgrade its technological capacity. An immediate benefit to members has been the series of webinars initiated in the fall of 2013.

“The three years of workshops have been a steady source of strength and wisdom for me.”

– A participant, TRLNA workshop series



Congress 2013

The Conference celebrated its nineteenth biennial National Congress in Saint Louis, MO, November 14-17, 2013. Some three hundred participants, guests, presenters and exhibitors gathered around the theme *Rooted in the Mission of Jesus: Reaching Out to the Margins*, a theme addressed with wisdom, energy, and insight by keynoters **Donald Senior, CP**, and **Nancy Schreck, OSF**. **Anthony Gittens, CSSp**, offered a pre-Congress workshop, “From International to Intercultural Communities: Theological, Personal, and Community Implications” and **Luisa Saffiotti, PhD**, the Conference’s annual Orientation to Formation workshop. Seminar presenters during Congress addressed such topics as assessing candidates’ readiness for mission, the justice of God as a call to generosity and hospitality, religious life in the 21st century, and addictions, compulsion, and attachment.

On a festive note, the Conference opened its 60th Anniversary Year with a historic exhibit and awarded our good friend and valued colleague, Anthony Gittens, CSSp, the Sister Mary Emil Penet Award for his outstanding contribution to the ministry of religious formation.

Webinars

In the autumn of 2013, the RFC offered its first webinars. **Judith Schaefer, OP**, opened the series with her presentation on *Communal Discernment*; **Ray Dlugos, OSA**, followed with *That Your Joy May be Full: The Emotional Journey to the Fullness of Life* and **Mary Lou Mitchell, SSJ**, led participants in *Contemplating the Gift of Vowed Life*.

The RFC webinars drew a steadily increasing number of participants, many of whom were international. It was especially exciting to see how many webinar participants identified themselves as belonging to the “general membership” of their congregations. Lifelong formation is an integral dimension of the Conference’s mission and webinars are clearly one vehicle for such formation.

“I was hoping to gain from the workshop ‘how to’s’ and ‘what to do’. I received something much deeper and more valuable: inner formation of myself.”

– A participant, Orientation to Formation, 2013

REGULAR PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND NEW INITIATIVES

Orientation to Formation

In 2013 **Orientation to Formation**, a conference-workshop designed for formation personnel, professed members of formative communities, and congregation leaders, was offered as a Pre-Congress Workshop. Led by **Luisa Saffiotti, PhD**, it attracted more than 50 participants, some preparing for or new to formation ministry, others refreshing and updating their expertise.



ForMission

An in-depth program for formation personnel and others accompanying members of their community at any stage of initial and lifelong formation, *ForMission* extends over a two year period, with two week long residential sessions each year. Between sessions, participants meet program responsibilities at home, forming a study group with members of their own congregations and engaging in peer supervision with other religious. In 2013, fifteen religious were engaged in *ForMission*. The program continues to attract participants, some of whom are international, with significant and diverse life experience and cultural backgrounds.

Life Commitment Program

First offered in 1984, the **Life Commitment Program** is the “oldest” of the Conference’s regular programs. Designed for women and men preparing for perpetual profession in their institutes, it brings together newer members from a variety of congregations and offers participants a community of peers at a sacred season in their lives. Input on the vows and other core elements of religious life, ample time for personal and communal prayer and reflection, liturgy, time for integration and for leisure characterize the program.

Three of the thirteen religious who took part in the 2013 Life Commitment Program at Villa Maria del Mar Retreat House in Santa Cruz, CA, are pictured above. Reflecting on the experience, one wrote, “...*I am ready for my Yes...*”



ForMission Participants and Staff, January 2014

RFC Services and Publications

Other Conference services include the possibility of consultation, by phone, email, or in person, with National Office staff. The Conference's quarterly electronic bulletin, *InFormation*, contains a substantive lead article appealing to formators, leaders and congregations' general membership, often a film or book review, particular materials addressed to those who hold responsibility for initial and/or lifelong formation within their congregations, and a listing of RFC events sponsored by the National Office as well as those offered by the Regions. Publications such as the **Facilitator Guide** and the **Resource Manual** remain available at the National Office. The **RFC website** is updated regularly, providing member congregations with current and archived materials; among the latter are RFC webinars, which are uploaded to the Members Only section of the website soon after their presentation and remain available to members who may have missed the live broadcast.



RFC National Office Staff, left to right: Carol Regan, SUSC, Associate Director; Violet Grennan, mfic, Executive Director; Yvonne DeBruin, Program Director; Katherine Kandefer, BVM, Administrative Assistant.

Engagement with Brothers Think Tank

The Religious Formation Conference, represented by its Executive Director, has been an active participant in the Brother's Think Tank, a collaborative undertaking of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Religious Brothers Conference, the National Religious Vocations Conference, and the RFC. The Think Tank meets twice each year; its focus is the promotion of the vocation of the Religious Brother.

60th Anniversary Events

2014 will mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Sister Formation Conference, which in 1976 became the Religious Formation Conference, the only national organization serving the needs of all women and men religious and focused on initial and lifelong formation for religious life and ministry.

Planning for this significant moment in the life of the Conference began in 2013. Congress 2013 marked the beginning of our anniversary year, where an exhibit illustrating the SFS/RFC's rich history was inaugurated. A series of celebratory gatherings, *From Center to Periphery: Relocating the Prophetic Witness of Religious Life*, will be held in five hub locations through October 214; Richard Gaillardetz, PhD, and Caroljean Willie, SC, PhD will be presenters at all five.

In the summer of 2013, RFC members were invited to contribute to a fund that would support anniversary events. Contributions are still being received and are still welcome!

NATIONAL BOARD AND COMMITTEES

The National Board of the Religious Formation Conference

Elaine Davia, CBS
Steven Dillard, SJ*
Susan Dunning, CSJ*
John Flynn, OSA
Mary Glackin, IHM
Jennifer Gordon, SCL
Joye Gros, OP
Maureen McMahon, RDC
Patricia Moriarty, RSM
Marilyn Pray, SSJ
Raul Salas, OMI
Clarice Suchy, STJ*
Noreen Walter, SCL*
Violet Grennan, mfc, *ex-officio**

**Executive Committee of the National Board*

Finance Committee

Steven Dillard, SJ
Violet Grennan, mfc
Michaela Huelbig*
Christopher Strub Kelly*
Carol Regan, SUSC
Patricia Moriarty, RSM
John Williams*

**Investment Sub-Committee*

Congress 2015 Planning Committee

Elaine Davia, CBS
Yvonne DeBruin
Violet Grennan, mfc
Joye Gros, OP
Katherine Kandefor, BVM
Carol Regan, SUSC

Advisory Council

Vincent Cushing, ofm
Yvonne DeBruin
Katherine Feely, SND
Violet Grennan, mfc
Luisa Saffiotti
Fintan Sheeran, SSSC

“I have enjoyed working, praying, and playing with the RFC national board and office staff. Our goal, to be a relevant, useful, and viable organization in these changing times in religious life and the world has been challenging and hope-filled.”

– Elaine Davia, CBS, Board member since 2012

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS MEMBER CONGREGATIONS

Tradition of Collaboration

The Religious Formation Conference inherited a strong tradition of collaboration from its predecessor, the Sister Formation Conference.

As our 60th anniversary year approaches, we name those organizations with which the Religious Formation Conference is privileged to collaborate:

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)

Giving Voice

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)

The National Communicators Network for Women Religious (NCNWR)

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)



The Sister Formation Conference Planning Committee, 1956

Member Congregations

The religious congregations who hold membership in the Religious Formation Conference support and sustain its life and mission, carry forward its heritage, and impel us into the future.

Currently, nearly two hundred North American congregations are members of the Conference; of these, thirty are men's institutes and the remainder, women's. When a congregation (or the governing unit of a congregation such as a province) joins the Conference, all its vowed members are considered RFC members. With a range of charisms and a diversity of experience and cultures, Religious Formation Conference members are one in their commitment to formation for life and mission within church and society in North America.

“The fostering of cooperation among congregations and the organizations serving their interests must be regarded as one of the most valuable outcomes of the Religious Formation Conference and the Sister Formation Conference.”

— Karen Kennelly, CSJ

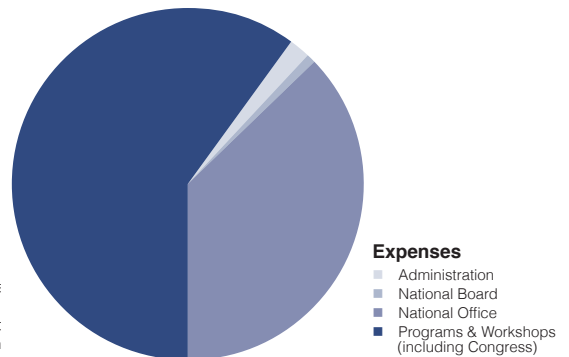
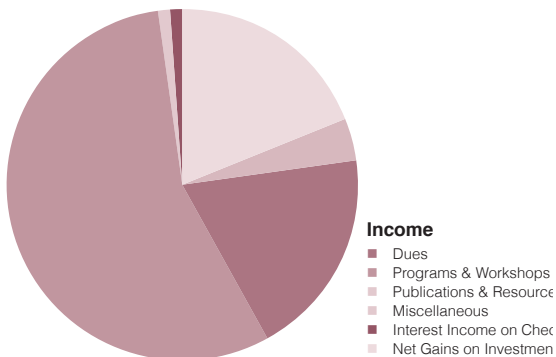
2013 FINANCES

Income

Dues	\$196,845.00
Programs and Workshops	\$581,400.00
Publications and Resources	\$4,709.00
Miscellaneous	\$8,335.00
Interest Income on Checking	\$31.00
Net Gains on Investments	\$211,411.00
Net Assets released from restriction	\$43,801.00
Total Revenue and Gains	\$1,046,532.00

Expenses

Administration	\$16,093
National Board	\$8,830
National Office	\$288,775
Programs and Workshops (includes Congress)	\$471,777
Total Expenses	\$785,475
Net Revenue	\$261,057

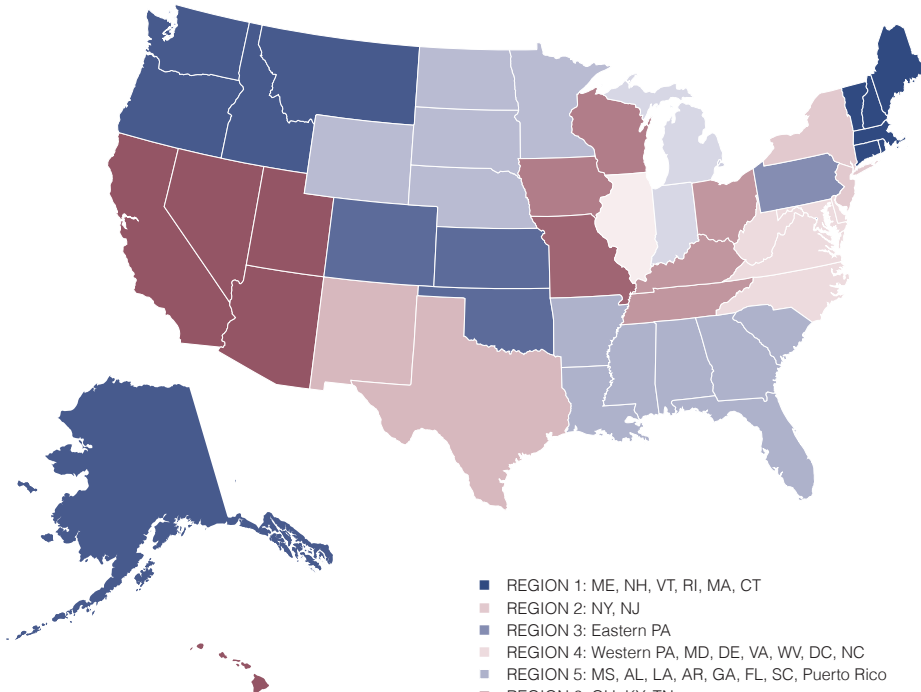


RFC REGIONS 2013

The national membership of the Religious Formation Conference is divided into geographic regions to carry forward the mission of the Conference locally. The number of regions and each region's territory is determined by the Conference's Board of Directors.

Regions host events sponsored by the RFC national office on topics pertinent to initial and lifelong formation in congregations of women and men religious. Many regions plan gatherings of particular

interest to the members of their geographic area. These may include specialized workshops for formators, the creation of peer supervision groups, inter-community pre-novitiate and/or novitiate programs, or sessions focused on lifelong formation. Regional gatherings provide a natural space for support and networking among formation personnel. The possibilities for any region's programs are as broad as the creativity, needs, and resources of its members.



- REGION 1: ME, NH, VT, RI, MA, CT
- REGION 2: NY, NJ
- REGION 3: Eastern PA
- REGION 4: Western PA, MD, DE, VA, WV, DC, NC
- REGION 5: MS, AL, LA, AR, GA, FL, SC, Puerto Rico
- REGION 6: OH, KY, TN
- REGION 7: MI, IN
- REGION 8: IL
- REGION 9: WI, IA
- REGION 10: Eastern MO
- REGION 11: NE, ND, SD, MN, WY, Western MO
- REGION 12: NM, TX
- REGION 13: CO, KS, OK
- REGION 14: CA, NV, UT, HI, AZ, Guam
- REGION 15: WA, OR, ID, MT, AK

LOOKING AHEAD ...

In the coming year, the Religious Formation Conference will mark its 60th anniversary and begin its 7th decade. At this significant season, the Conference, through its National Board and National Office Staff in particular, is engaged in the dynamic natural to such an anniversary: remembering and giving thanks for what has been and anticipating the future.

The rich heritage that is the Conference's inspires us as we move into the future and we draw on the strengths those who began the Sister/Religious Formation Conference exhibited: vision, a commitment to collaboration, steadfastness, attention to present and emerging needs, deep grounding in the Gospel and our Catholic tradition.

Accordingly, the National Board of the Religious Formation Conference has articulated a strategic plan for the next five years, incorporating five Directional Statements:

- To integrate the Conference's Mission and Vision Statements into all programs and practices
- To reshape the organization's governance, processes and practices to reflect realities affecting religious life

- To develop, evaluate and sustain programs for transformational learning
- To envision, create and build mutually beneficial partnerships with organizations that further the Religious Formation Conference's mission to religious congregations in North America
- To steward the resources of the organization.

The Religious Formation Conference's past and our hopes for its future meet today, in our present, and call us to create new chambers to house new expressions of the Conference's mission to foster and serve initial and lifelong formation for the women and men committed to religious life and mission in North America and beyond. It is our privilege to embrace this challenge.



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