

Retirement Fund for Religious

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National Religious Retirement Office



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News

Message from the Director

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When I first joined the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) as Education and Outreach Manager, I witnessed firsthand the vital importance of ongoing formation and resources for the well-being of our religious communities.

That experience continues to shape my perspective now as director. At every step, I am reminded that our mission is not only to provide financial support but also to equip leaders with the tools they need to care for our aging religious.

One such resource is our vital collaboration with the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI). Each year, the NRRO sponsors workshops at the RCRI National Conference, providing attendees with practical tools and insights. This year in Dallas, our sponsored sessions focused on supporting aging religious through transitions, fostering inclusive environments for those living with dementia, and creating purposeful communities.

I encourage every religious institute to attend this annual gathering. If funding is a concern, the NRRO offers Management and Continuing Education Assistance (*see page 3*), which supports leadership and retirement planning through workshops, consultations, and practical planning tools.

Beyond the conference, the NRRO also collaborates with religious institutes to provide ongoing educational opportunities through webinars, video series, and publications on aging and eldercare. We hope you will visit our website, join us for an upcoming webinar, explore our archive of past sessions, or read one of our publications.

We are here to partner with you on your journey in caring for your aging religious.

In Christ,

John Knutsen
Director

Conference Insights: Ideas That Inspire Action

Each year, the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) hosts a national conference for religious communities, offering a wide range of sessions on finance, canon and civil law, and planning for institutes in transition, along with workshops sponsored by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO).

The 2025 conference marked the 16th year of this gathering, which draws an average of more than 500 participants. Over three and a half days, the conference featured 41 workshops as well as two pre-conference sessions—one half-day and one full-day. The theme for this year's conference was "Pilgrims of Hope—Guided by the Spirit." Cardinal Joseph Tobin, CSSR, Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, delivered the keynote address.

The NRRO sessions focused on supporting aging religious through transitions, as well as fostering welcoming and inclusive environments for those living with dementia. Other topics included ways to promote meaningful engagement, connection, and care to foster the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all members.

True to its mission, the RCRI continues to serve its member institutes by providing integrated education, advocacy, consultation, and collaborative initiatives that support religious institutes in meeting their current and emerging stewardship responsibilities.

2025–2026 NRRO Calendar

December

13–14 Retirement Fund for Religious National Collection

January

5 Direct Care Assistance applications mailed

February

10 NRRO Webinar, Topic TBD

March

31 Direct Care Assistance applications due

Conference Highlights

For the past seven years, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) has sponsored an eldercare track at the RCRI conference. Most recently, the 2025 gathering took place from September 30 to October 3 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dallas, Texas. The NRRO eldercare track provided meaningful learning and connection opportunities. Here are some highlights.

“New Home, New Life, New Ministry?”

Sr. Mary Kay Brooks, SSND; Sr. Pam Chiesa, PBVM; Ray Mattes, IHM; and Sr. Michelle Woodruff, ASC

In this workshop, presenters framed the closings of convents and monasteries not simply as losses, but as opportunities. These transitions, though challenging, can open pathways for community life and ministry. A panel of religious leaders—Sr. Mary Kay Brooks, SSND; Sr. Pam Chiesa, PBVM; Ray Mattes, IHM; and Sr. Michelle Woodruff, ASC—shared their experiences of moving from longtime homes into new settings.



Ray Mattes, IHM

The most impactful moments came from videos of community members who had made these transitions. Their stories deeply moved and energized attendees, making the combination of leadership insights and personal witness the true highlight of the session.

“Ensuring a Life-Giving, Purposeful Community”

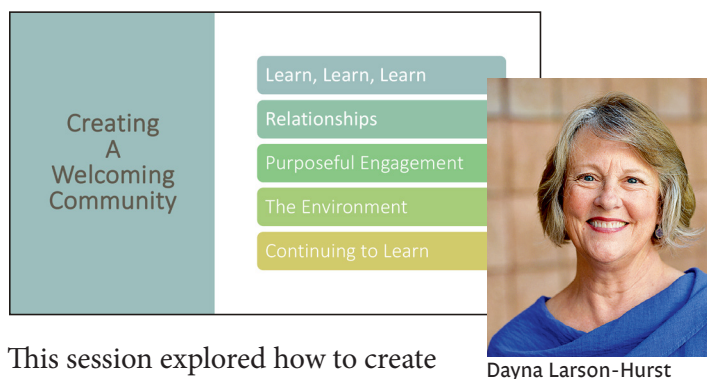
Alicia Petrovich and Caralyn Treharne

The presenters highlighted aging as a unique opportunity to reflect, share wisdom, and deepen one's mission through four key components: promoting engagement and purpose, offering collaborative care and support, creating opportunities to build relationships and connections, and honoring one's mission. The workshop also provided practical strategies for fostering communities that support the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of its religious members.

Conference Insights: Ideas That Inspire Action, *continued***“Hospitality and Dementia: Creating a Community Where All Are Welcome”**

Dayna Larson-Hurst

Dayna Larson-Hurst has been an affiliated independent NRRO consultant for ten years, primarily involved in eldercare consultations and educational initiatives. She assists with planning the NRRO’s quarterly webinars, its sponsored workshops at the annual RCRI conference, its video series, and more.



This session explored how to create a welcoming, hospitable environment for members living with dementia, emphasizing the importance of intentionality. Participants considered practical ways to foster supportive relationships, adapt environments, clarify roles and boundaries, encourage purposeful engagement, and provide ongoing education, all to enhance community life for those affected by the disease. Through learning practical tips for applying these strategies, participants aimed to improve their own lives and those of others.

Management and Continuing Education Assistance

Each year, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) designates a portion of the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection to support Management and Continuing Education Assistance. Eligible religious institutes may apply for up to \$5,000 per calendar year to strengthen retirement planning through continuing education for leaders in finance, administration, health care, and development, as well as to acquire essential management resources.

Institutes may use Management and Continuing Education Assistance funds for the following:

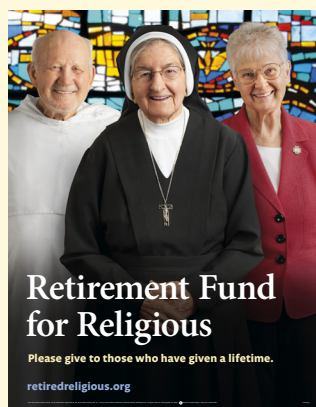
- Ongoing education at workshops and conferences in financial management, eldercare delivery, or fundraising
- Participation in national conferences, such as the one hosted by the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI), as well as related workshops
- An NRRO eldercare consultation or review of the cost-effectiveness of eldercare delivery
- Financial assistance to underwrite financial forecasting software, related training, and technical support
- Expenses for facilitators to assist leadership or community processes related to eldercare
- Expenses for speakers to address planning or eldercare topics at membership gatherings
- Computers, software, and training for computerization of accounting and/or development functions
- A financial forecast or other assistance with planning

Applications can be submitted throughout the year, but must be received by November 30 of each calendar year.

Please contact Karen Cañas at (202) 541-3215 or kcanas@usccb.org, or visit <https://www.usccb.org/offices/national-religious-retirement-office/management-and-education-assistance> to learn more.

Retirement Fund for Religious National Collection—December 13–14

This annual collection underwrites the funding, services, and educational assistance the NRRO provides. Please give it your vocal and prayerful support. Download promotional materials, including text and images to share on social media, at retiredreligious.org/materials.





National Religious Retirement Office

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Stay Connected

Please send changes in address, phone, email, or congregational leadership to the NRRO, c/o Karen Cañas (kcanas@usccb.org), so that we may keep our records and mailing lists updated.

The National Religious Retirement Office coordinates the national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes these funds to eligible religious institutes for their retirement needs. Our mission is to support, educate, and assist religious institutes in the United States to embrace their current retirement realities and to plan for the future.

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