Building up the 20/30 Community

When we envision Call To Action's future as one including a vibrant community of engaged young people, we can do so only because of the generosity of Shirley Adler. By establishing a scholarship fund to make it possible for young people to come to conference, she has made a lasting impact on our community.

“Shirley Adler’s vision of including young adults in Call To Action and having their experience influence our work has forever changed Call To Action for the better. When Shirley established the Adler conference scholarships to give young adults access to our national conference, she envisioned CTA as an intergenerational organization. Today, young adults play an influential role in almost every aspect of Call To Action and that influence continues to grow,” says Executive Director Jim FitzGerald.

Growing up in South Dakota, she felt called to religious life early on and entered the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is telling that she entered an order that was founded underground; an order of nuns never meant to wear a habit. When she left religious life she continued her work in ministry and serve the Church.

Upon walking into conference 20 years ago and seeing all the white hair, it inspired her to start the scholarship fund. The need for young people to be more engaged in our movement is pressing. Shirley says, “I understand that young people are just starting out or in school, but they need a voice in the movement, so I felt a sense of urgency to act quickly.”

Cultivating the future of our church, continuing the legacy of Vatican II, is crucial to Call To Action's mission. Looking back, Shirley recalls the exodus of many in the church because of abuses in authority, policies forbidding married and women priests, and other mandates that have caused harm. That’s why she connects with many of the values Call To Action stands for – LGBT justice, women’s equality, racial justice, church worker issues, and lay engagement.

Bonnie Johnson, Director of Development, had the opportunity to sit down with Shirley and get to know her better.

Bonnie: What issues are you passionate about?
Shirley: Getting people involved in the church who are serious about forming their conscience. Let’s remember catholic means universal – all of us are called to faithful prayer and action. How do we live this out? Hopefully, young people can bring their children up in the church with the values we all share, giving new life and energy to our communities.

Bonnie: What sort of ministry have you done?
Shirley: Retreat work with young adults – I always appreciated the vision of younger people. Before attending the CTA conference, I was working in adult education around the Second Vatican Council. I taught in Catholic schools for 10 years and then worked in pastoral ministry and got to preach every 3rd Sunday.

Bonnie: Why did you establish the scholarship fund?
Shirley: Years ago, I had no money and needed assistance to attend the 1995 conference. Two years later, I was so situated that I could pay it forward and establish this fund to help others like me.

Bonnie: What is your hope for the Church?
Shirley: Greater openness to all: empathy to those who need it, celebrating God’s diversity, meaningful worship, and practical applications of the Gospel. I want the church to have its arms around all people, in love, rather than its laws. I want to breathe Eucharist beyond the immediate community. I want a church where older people are open to the newness of young people and young people are open to the wisdom of older people, especially those interested in carrying on the Spirit of Vatican II.

Bonnie: What inspires you to work for transformation?
Shirley: The Holy Spirit! It goes back to my parents. We were deeply rooted in our faith early on. To see so much goodness happen by inspired people inspires me, too!

Resource Spotlight
Hungering and Thirsting for Justice

A few years ago several young adults got together, most of them involved in Call To Action’s young adult community, and published the book Hungering and Thirsting for Justice: Real-Life Stories by Young Adult Catholics. The book reflects on how young adults are called to carry out their faith within their daily lives. Be challenged and inspired by their passion, dedication, courage, and love for God and others.
Letter from the executive director

Young Adults

While holding many different opinions on a variety of topics, one area where Call To Action members agree is to diversify CTA’s community of members and supporters. As we look to the horizon, we envision a Call To Action community that is made up of communities of color, differing vocations and perspectives, and intergenerational.

Over fifteen years ago, Call To Action made a commitment to engage in the ongoing work that would ultimately result in young adults having significant influence on the organization. Today, young adults play influential roles in almost every sphere of Call To Action – from national staff to members of the conference planning committee, from the board of directors to contributors to the young adult blog.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to those visionaries so many years ago that planted the seeds for this kind of transformation in Call To Action.

This edition of CTA News & Notes is devoted to the many ways Catholics around the country are engaging in Call To Action’s programs that are inspiring Catholics to transform the church. CTA 20/30, Call To Action’s young adult outreach program, has grown to become an official leadership constituency in Call To Action in large part because of the visionary role of Shirley Adler. Shirley established the Adler scholarship for young adults to access the national conference. Throughout the last 15 years, hundreds of Catholics ages 18-30 experienced the energy and passion that is Call To Action because of her generous support. Thanks to Shirley, young adults are the fastest growing constituency in Call To Action.

This issue of CTA News & Notes also reports on other aspects Call To Action’s transformational work – a new and exciting tour this fall, continued anti-racism work, young adult programming, chapter strategic planning and much more.

As always, thank you for inspiring Catholics to transform the Church they love!

Sincerely,

Jim FitzGerald
Executive Director

The Well of Many Rivers:
Creating Currents of Change

Call To Action 2014 National Conference
November 7-9, 2014 | Memphis, TN

Kerry Kennedy
Rev. James Lawson
Sr. Elizabeth Johnson

Register today!
www.cta-usa.org
Anti-racism Team Continues Challenge of Dismantling Racist Structures

As we say again and again, the members of Call To Action strive to create a more just and inclusive Church. With our Anti-Racism initiative, we also strive to create a more inclusive CTA by naming and struggling with the structures of racism in our world. CTA's anti-racism initiative officially began with conversations on the Board in 2001, in response to the question of many members: “Why is CTA so white, when our Church and world are not?” Our history as an organization dedicated to creating a more inclusive Church makes answering this question and dismantling structures of racism essential to our mission.

Exploring that question is not always comfortable, especially for White people, but it is vital to our work for justice. The combination of prejudice and power creates structures of racism, which entrench themselves in our world and subconscious. Racism is deeply rooted in this country, not only in our history of slavery and genocide but in the structures around us, which sometimes intentionally oppress and almost always unintentionally exclude. Dismantling these structures is a key element of all of CTA’s work in creating a more just Church. We cannot ignore the ways in which racism interacts with the other social justice issues we work on, or downplay the ways it destroys communities.

In 2004 our Anti-Racism Team (ART) was formed with the help of consultants from Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing to help us critically examine and change what we are doing to unintentionally exclude others or perpetuate oppression. Like all of our volunteer teams, ART is a wonderfully committed community of people who support one another as we journey together. Examining our own role in structures of oppression is hard, and we rely on one another as we struggle and grow. The team’s role in supporting CTA through that transforming process for the last 10 years is hugely important. They offer trainings, resources and one on one conversation to our chapters and teams and also consult with the staff, board and leadership constituencies to analyze decision making processes and planning as we try to become a more welcoming space that recognizes and celebrates the gifts and wisdom of all people.

Ministering to All God’s Families Webinar Series

Upcoming webinars:

Aug. 8: Living as an Interfaith Family
Oct. 12: Welcome and Supporting Single People

Information? www.cta-usa.org/families-webinars
A Prophetic Call to Justice

West Coast Conference Reflection

Over 300 people gathered the weekend of May 3rd in Sacramento, CA for the 2014 West Coast Regional Call To Action Conference. Organized by chapter members in the area, the gathering focused on empowering the people of God and our prophetic call to justice. Keynote speakers included Jamie Manson, Matthew Fox, and Sister Simone Campbell. In addition to community building and learning, the group shared meals and fellowship, and assembled for prayer and liturgy.

In his keynote address, Matthew Fox commented that, “even with a good Pope, we can fall into papalogy” and that we “set ourselves up for idolatry when we focus too much on ecclesiology.” Instead, he encouraged participants to see Church as a movement and verb: just-seeking, peace-making, love-centered, mystic-being. In this way religion moves beyond place or institution to the realm of values, spiritual and just practices. To those in the older generation, he presented a vocational challenge: replace retirement with re-firement. Become alive – on fire – in a new way in building up the reign of God.

Jamie Manson’s workshop on young adults was equally as moving. “What do young adults want today?” she posed to the group. Quiet prayer, communal meals that build community, safe spaces, and authentic relationships rose to the top. To those engaged in ministry with young adults today, she encouraged those gathered to open themselves up to young adults in new ways by asking some simple questions: What do you need? How can we serve you? What can we do to keep you? Young adults, she notes, have a desire for things to fit together, that “the small ‘s’ sacraments must give big ‘s’ sacraments meaning.”

Simone Campbell captivated the audience by encouraging our Church and the world to seek justice for the 100%. “How do I see the giftedness of the other?” and “What can we fight for together?” were featured questions in her presentation. In this journey, we must “let our hearts be broken, broken open, room for more.” The stories of real people, their lives and experiences, not theoretical constructs, should galvanize our response to those in need, on the margins, needing the gifts of hope and love. The contemplative life, infused with activist values, give us the best chance at building community and faith in today’s fragmented world.

Finally, at both the opening and closing liturgy, the assembly gathered for prayer, contemplated the Word of God, and lifted their voices in song. “Sing a New Church” and the invocation of the prophets – Desmond Tutu, Sr. Megan Rice, Margaret Mead and others – recalled all those in our tradition who bore prophetic witness in their Church. In addition, Jane Via’s homily on Sunday was a sending forth to continue our work and ministry as prophets in our day, living faithfully, boldly, and justly the Gospel call.
As Catholics we are all called to examine our consciences and to be prophets in creating a better Church. We are constantly inspired by those in our midst who have stood up for their consciences; one such person is Fr. Tony Flannery. Catholics across the country will have a chance to hear him this fall as part of a national speaking tour sponsored by several organizations, including Call To Action. Author of the book, A Question of Conscience, Fr. Flannery will be greeted by CTA members from DC to Sacramento and 15 cities in between.

Fr. Flannery is a Redemptorist father and a founding member of the Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland, a group of priests who have called for reforms in our Church. In 2012 he was reprimanded by the Vatican and told that if he wished to continue preaching he would need to sign a statement agreeing with all Church teachings, including the impossibility of women’s ordination. Fr. Flannery refused to sign the statement, which would have gone against his conscience, and also refused to be silenced.

His vision of reform and his passionate story of standing up for his conscience will energize all of us in our work to co-create this Church we believe in.

Catholics across the country will have a chance to discuss the current climate of the Church and the need for grassroots change with Fr. Flannery this fall. As he travels and meets with groups in each city, his vision of reform and his passionate story of standing up for his conscience will energize all of us in our work to co-create this Church we believe in.

Stay tuned for more details as the planning continues!

20/30 Faith-Sharing Retreat in July

This July 11-13, over 20 progressive Catholic young adults from around the United States will gather for a retreat and workshop sponsored by the CTA 20/30 Leadership Team. The gathering in Boston will equip young leaders with the tools to begin or revitalize small faith-sharing groups in their communities. The retreat will inspire participants to foster young progressive Catholic community near them – in a variety of creative forms. We hope some retreatants will go home and start a potluck series in their city, or a 20/30 group within a CTA chapter, or a progressive prayer circle.

The weekend will connect emerging progressive Catholic leaders with each other by expanding and deepening the network of young Catholics committed to progressive community-building and activism in the church. The retreat will be facilitated by Emily Jendzejec, a former member of the 20/30 Leadership Team.
Chapter Undertakes Visioning, Strategic Planning

Tom and Betty Hill share their experience of the Western Washington Chapter’s strategic planning and organizing process.

CTA Western Washington became an active chapter in 1999. We are blessed by having a very wonderful group of people who have agreed to serve this chapter and participate in strategic visioning and planning.

Currently CTAWW has four goals: They are 1. Providing a sense of community; 2. Providing educational resources; 3. Being advocates for a just and inclusive church; and 4. Promoting CTAWW to the wider community. Processing these goals includes a two day planning retreat in September, followed by three additional quarterly planning/dinner meetings. In September we spend time brainstorming with questions, such as what are the positives and negatives of the environment in which we are working as an organization, as well as our hopes and dreams for the future. We identify a few tasks that are added to at our quarterly meeting throughout the year.

Our action plans come out of this brainstorming. In addition, in 2011 we asked our members to respond to a survey to help identify those issues that were critical for them. Our members identified the following issues as being the most important, in the following priority.

1. Women’s place in the church and women’s ordination
2. Rights of all baptized Catholics in the church
3. LGBT issues
4. Transparency and credibility with the church’s hierarchy
5. Lack of emphasis on social teaching

Here is a list of programs we have implemented to meet our goals and to respond to our members:

In the area of Advocacy we have been involved in the following actions. Following the LCWR’s investigation, we joined other CTA chapters by conducting four separate vigils at the Cathedral supporting our sisters. We support the LGBT community by marching in the Gay Pride Parade in Olympia and Seattle. We demonstrated for 6 weeks in Olympia for the passage of the bill that allows LGBT folks to legally marry in the State of Washington. We participated in presenting a petition to the archdiocese asking for the reinstatement of Mr. Z who was fired from his role as vice-principal at a local Catholic High School because he married his partner. In 2013 we hosted the Tipping Point tour with Fr. Helmut Schuller and had over 400 attend.

Education: Several times a week we send out articles of interest to our 400 members and friends, which, in turn, get sent out multiple times again by these same people. We try to bring in two speakers per year for our general membership. Some of our recent speakers have included Jamie Manson, Aimee Upjohn Light, Sr. Jeannine Gramick and Frank De Bernardo, Michael Morwood, Roy Bourgeois and others. Education continues in our five small faith communities. They watch videos from the conference as well as other sources.

Spirituality: We have sponsored two retreats. The first was in 2011 and it featured Sr. Fran Ferder and Fr. John Heagle, Justice Rising, Trusting the Emerging Spirit of Solidarity. This year we had Sr. Barbara Fiand who spoke on Encountering Jesus as Christ of our Today and Tomorrow. Of all the programs we have put on these two programs received the highest ratings in the evaluations the attendees filled out.

Community: Building community over such a large geographical area is a challenge. Again we went to our survey and those that filled it out said they would like one General Meeting per year. We have completed three of them. This year we used portions of the panel with Maureen Fiedler from the 2013 conference and had great discussions. Last year we modeled how you can have a ritual with your local meeting in conjunction with discussion.

In addition, Call to Action has been directly responsible for our state’s first Roman Catholic Womenpriest. Diane Whalen attended an event where we had Bishop Patricia Fresen both speak and celebrate a liturgy with us. This was Diane’s inspiration to be ordained and her community, Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community, is just finishing its fourth year.

Folks who are involved in one of the communities that are a part of CTAWW stay involved. We have a fair number who have attended our national conference and they support our efforts. It can be a challenge to get fence sitters to join our efforts, but when they do they are excited by our work. We hope Pope Francis will have a positive effect on pointing out the needs we all share. The few good parishes are absolutely great but the vast majority are in terrible shape. This is where Call To Action can come in. We are a place that gives people a voice and that gives us hope.

For more information on chapters, visit: www.cta-usa.org/chapters.
Looking to connect with Catholics in your area? Check out our chapters at www.cta-usa.org/chapters

Calendar of upcoming events

July 12 | 10 am – 3 pm
Gathering of CTA Chapter leaders from the Midwest
Common Goals and Strategies for Growth: Facilitated by Bob Heineman
Holy Wisdom Monastery, Madison
Register with Jim Green: bjledergreen1@tds.net; 608 669-2886

July 16 | 7:00 pm
St Mary Magdala Celebration with Rev. Dagmar Braun Celeste of the Danube Seven, the first women ordained Roman Catholic priests (2002).
Maple Grove UMC, 7 W Henderson Rd, Columbus
Call To Action Columbus www.cta-columbus.org

July 19
Meeting For CTA-NJ
Looking for people to join our board. Think about it!!!!
Contact: Mary, 732 833-4166, or E-mail at austin499@optonline.net

July 20 | 7:00 pm
Mary Magdalene Celebration
Gospel of John - Interpretive Dance
Call to Action - PA; Sisters of Mercy Convent; 3333 Fifth Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Contact: Theresa Orlando; torlando14@verizon.net

August 10
Call To Action Webinar Series
Interfaith Families
www.cta-usa.org/webinars

September 17 | 7:00 pm
Fr. Robert J. Marrone of the Community of St Peter in Cleveland, OH
Fr Marrone kept his parish community alive and open after it was ordered closed by the archbishop.
Maple Grove UMC, 7 W Henderson Rd, Columbus.
Call To Action Columbus www.cta-columbus.org

September 20
Gospel Nonviolence: Option or Obligation?
Pax Christi Memphis hosts a Retreat with Father Charles McCarthy
Church of the Holy Spirit, Memphis.
Contacts: Judy and Jerry Bettice: jbetmite@earthlink.net; 901 327-8068

October 4
Open Window Conference
“Life in the Underground: Reflections from a Secular Priest” by Fr. Donald Cozzens, a priest and writer of two award-winning books, Sacred Silence: Denial and the Crisis in the Church and The Changing Face of the Priesthood.
Northway Christian Church, 7202 W. Northwest Hwy., Dallas TX
Contact: Sandra and Pat Haigh
The Open Window (CTA Dallas) pshaigh@juno.com; 214 808-2398

October 12
CTA Minnesota, Fall Retreat for Catholic Parents who have GLBT family members
11:30 am gathering; 5:00 pm Mass; 6:00 pm dinner and 40th Anniversary of Dignity/Twin Cities Prospect Park United Methodist Church, Mpls.
Contact: artstoeberl@yahoo.com; 651 636-7356

October 12
Call To Action Webinar
Single people.
www.cta-usa.org/webinars

October 18
CTA Minnesota, Fall Conference
Where Love and Justice Meet: An Emerging Sexual Ethic for Our Time
Sr. Fran Ferder, PhD, and Fr. John Heagle, MA, JCL, Presenters
Contact: artstoeberl@yahoo.com; 651 636-7356

October 27
Commonweal’s 90th Anniversary Celebration
New York City
Contact: Christa Kerber; CKerber@commonwealmagazine.org

November 19 | 7:00 pm
Homelessness in Columbus with Mike Tynan of the Open Shelter
Maple Grove UMC, 7 W Henderson Rd, Columbus.
Call To Action Columbus www.cta-columbus.org

November 7-9
Call To Action 2014 National Conference
The Well of Many Rivers: Creating Currents of Change
Memphis, TN

To view complete event details and submit items visit the Call To Action calendar online at: www.cta-usa.org/calendar