

2019 Annual Report:  
*Building from a Strong Foundation*

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## VISION FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

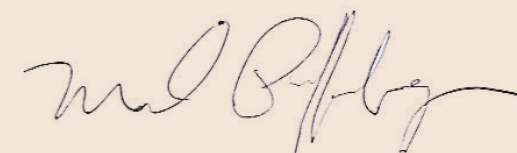
I wrote the following in a letter dated October 12, 2017 on the 30th anniversary of the founding of the CAC:

After years of prayer and reflection, we are now launching into a new vision for CAC. Our aim is to help Fr. Richard's message and vision continue to have impact in the world for generations to come. We will continue to support his own teaching for as long as he offers it. However, with his guidance, we will focus on providing opportunities for transformative spiritual experiences and practices rooted in this alternative orthodoxy and not just the work of any single teacher. For the first time, we will also form partnerships with teachers who live and teach from this same vision and broaden our programs and mediums to serve the aspirations of a new generation of seekers.

Sitting here just shy of three years later, I'm proud to say that the manifestation of this vision is maturing rapidly. We now have a core faculty of five wisdom teachers and a growing roster of emerging and guest teachers, supported by a talented staff of nearly 50, overseen by an incredible

Board and in community with hundreds of thousands of "you" around the world.

Our teaching is reaching more people in more powerful ways who express having finally found a spiritual home in the Christian traditions of action and contemplation. Together, we are all recovering the contemplative depths of Christianity and contributing to movements for transformation in our world. This is the vision our founder is imparting to us, along with his gift and legacy of sharing it so effectively. That vision is now ours to steward, in partnership with our teachers and community. Thanks to your commitment and support, I have no doubt that it will continue to inform and inspire spiritual seekers for generations to come.



Michael Poffenberger



Michael Poffenberger, CAC Executive Director

Michael joined the CAC as Executive Director in 2014 after first serving on the Board of Directors. He is responsible for overseeing a multi-year strategy to develop CAC as a 21st Century platform for transformative spiritual teaching that builds upon Fr. Richard's lifetime of work. Michael graduated from the University of Notre Dame, where he was first impacted by the teaching of contemplative activists such as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton. He then spent ten years doing advocacy and peacebuilding work in Washington, DC, as Executive Director for Resolve. At Resolve, Michael led bipartisan coalitions and developed international campaigns to advance policy change for war-affected communities in Africa. Outside of his work, Michael is a dad to his four-year-old daughter, Madeleine.

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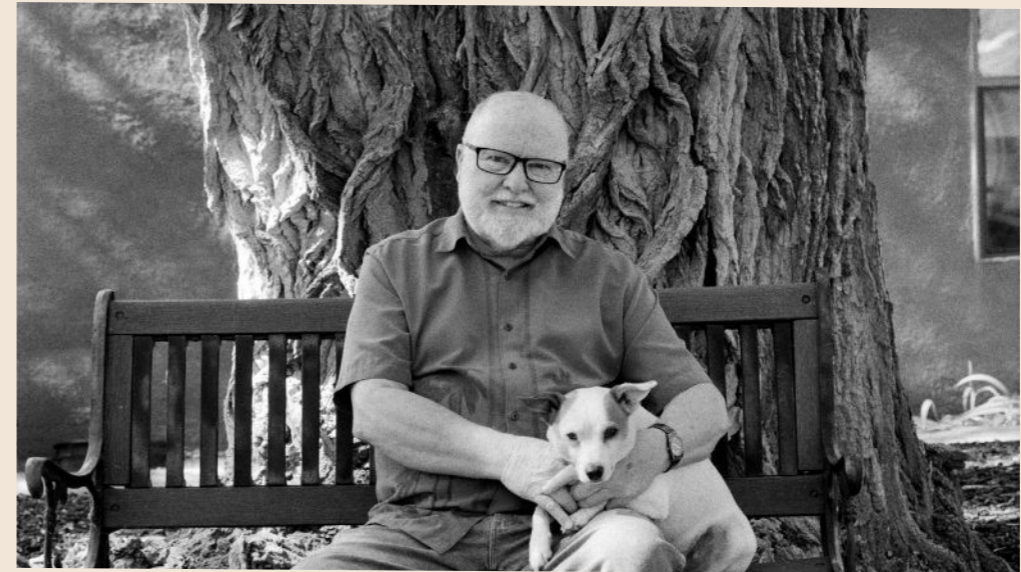
## BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION TOGETHER

As I happily enter my final years, the CAC continues to grow and expand because we realize it is our responsibility to offer something more solid, broader, and beyond Richard Rohr—an organization that does not depend on me at all for its credibility. We have been moving in this direction for some years now. We are sincerely asking, “How can the CAC continue to be of service, building on what God has already done with us, and offer something of further value that can have authority and believability on its own?”

We began the Living School in 2014, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Bourgeault and Dr. James Finley joined us as faculty. This past year, we have added Dr. Barbara Holmes and Brian McLaren to that inspired list. What a team of master teachers!

The question now is, “How can this small but strong foundation of wisdom teachers be of service to the world and to Love?” We do not want to drop into any scarcity mode, reactive position, or the politics of despair. We are all convinced of and committed to the Christian contemplative tradition as the way through and beyond this morass.

Thank you for partnering with us in this reformation that is rising from the bottom, nonviolent and beyond the usual



Richard Rohr and his three year old Jack Russell terrier, Opie

arguments, a movement that transforms human consciousness at both the conscious and unconscious levels. Moving forward, what else will change our politics and our religions?

Peace and all good,  
Richard Rohr

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Rohr".

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## A SCHOOL FOR PROPHETS

Over the past thirty-three years, the Center for Action and Contemplation has gone through many iterations, but the essential vision has remained rooted in Fr. Richard's founding purpose: to operate as a “school for prophets,” an almost “underground seminary” to teach the alternative Franciscan Orthodoxy of both praxis and prayer, action and contemplation.

We are grateful to share with you a look into the future that we are building from this strong foundation.



In July 1987, just one year after moving to Albuquerque New Mexico and establishing the Center for Action and Contemplation, Fr. Richard wrote the following in a letter to some of its early partners:

The base image for the Center for Action and Contemplation is that of a school: a school of the Spirit, a training ground for prophetic workers within the churches, a hands-on formation center where both the spiritual and social questions can be addressed.

In this time, when our American culture is almost entirely dominant, we need to find time and space to “nurture the alternative consciousness.” Our desire will be to gather partners, volunteers, and interns who can together explore such issues as community, peacemaking, world hunger, refugee issues, housing, prisoners, Hispanic and Native American concerns, sexism, and oppression. We want to regain the Biblical perspective from the bottom and the edges of society.

We want to allow the poor to seriously influence our lives so that we can again meet Jesus in the least of the sisters and brothers.

The Tradition of saints and prophets tells us that this alternative consciousness will be solid and trustworthy only if it is grounded in contemplative union. Mere idealism, activism or liberalism is not sufficient for the task. It is only contemplatives who can live at the Center and move beyond their own center. Folks who are not committed to seeking an inner life and a serious search for union with God will not feel called to such a school.

The task of the prophet was to make the private pain personal and public. The task of the Christian is to awaken the spiritual joy that is bound up within us. We want to give ourselves to these holy tasks in a Franciscan atmosphere of simplicity and humility. The emphasis will not be on careers, certification, or security in ministry, but the creation of an environment where the more radical questions of self and society can be met.

We need your prayers and advice. Pray that we listen well at the beginning.

Over the next few pages, we will explore how 33 years later the Center for Action and Contemplation continues to build from this incredible foundational vision.

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## CARRYING THE LINEAGE FORWARD

“I only saw Thomas Merton once. He walked in front of my family and me when we were visiting the Abbey of Gethsemani in early June 1961. I stood back in awe as he walked with two sisters and their driver right in front of us. He was returning them to their car as we approached the old guesthouse. One of the sisters was Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

I believe Thomas Merton was a true prophet, and I use that word in its classic sense, as one who sees at a higher level and thus, in effect, foresees. A biblical prophet is one who lives on the edge of organized religion as a truth speaker, and yet from the loving and experienced depths of that religion.

Thomas Merton, like almost no one else in our time, put together the mystical depths and the political implications of the Christian message. He did it in a way that confirmed for many of us a kind of “deep Christianity.” He wrote things that still now are showing themselves to be true and even central to spiritual truth.

A prophet intuitively knows that he or she cannot stand alone but needs the wisdom and protection of a living faith community, and years of the deep listening and loving that many forms of religious life can ideally provide.”

—Richard Rohr

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## IN THE MIDST OF THE WORLD

“My understanding of CAC, and why it’s so meaningful to me, comes out of having been in the monastery with Thomas Merton. Through Merton, I was immersed in the contemplative mystical heritage of my own Christian faith—opening me to all the contemplative traditions of the world and prompting in me a heightened sensitivity to respond to suffering in the world, wherever it occurs.

Merton was bearing witness to contemplative Christianity at the monastery; Richard was bearing witness to contemplative Christianity in the midst of the world. That’s why I find it so meaningful.

Merton said that a lot of Catholics are losing their faith in church because the church is not bearing witness to its own mystical lineage. When you do start to bear witness to it, you see this huge response—this hunger in people. I think that’s what CAC is all about. CAC responds to that hunger, bears witness to it, and then offers trustworthy guidance in how to follow that path and share it with other people.

It’s our turn to pass on this lineage of transformation.”

—Dr. Jim Finley





## OUR VISION

Amidst a time of planetary change and disruption, we envision a recovery of our deep connection to each other and our world, led by Christian and other spiritual movements that are freeing leaders and communities to overcome dehumanizing systems of oppression and cooperate in the transforming work of Love.

*Our Board of Directors adopted these mission and vision statements in December of 2018 after an extensive process of clarifying our role in this expanding contemplative movement.*

## OUR MISSION

Open the door for a critical mass of spiritual seekers to experience the transformative wisdom of the Christian contemplative tradition and nurture its emergence in service to the healing of our world.

## EXPANSION OF OUR CORE FACULTY

A key priority for CAC has been to effectively partner with an expanding team of gifted faculty to serve as elders, teachers, and spiritual leaders for everything that we do. In 2019 we were blessed with the fantastic additions of Rev Dr. Barbara Holmes and Rev Dr. Brian McLaren, joining Fr. Richard Rohr, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Bourgeault, and Dr. James Finley as the core Faculty of the CAC.

**“To be a wisdom teacher at the CAC, someone must have a first-hand experience of the power and grace of God, like Dr. Barbara Holmes. She doesn’t just know about God; she knows God.”**

**—Richard Rohr**

## TEACHING HIGHLIGHTS

**Jim Finley:** Interior Castle Online Course

**Cynthia Bourgeault:** Mary Magdalene and Introductory Wisdom School Online Courses

**Barbara Holmes:** Race and the Cosmos publication (and accompanying artistic video trailer)

**Brian McLaren:** Co-leader Living School Intensives with Fr. Richard Rohr beginning in 2019

“For me, a spiritual practice that matters includes social renewal. Instead of blaming others about the state of our union, instead of blaming one political party or another, we actually can reflect on our own complicity and support of systems that abandoned the poor, warehoused our children in failing schools, and failed to provide adequate health care, even under normal circumstances. As a spiritual practice, we can wake up to the possibility of building a new order.”

—Dr. Barbara Holmes



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## EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNITY

CAC intends to meet people where they are and develop initiatives that are scalable and adaptable to address life's disruptions with prophetic insight. In doing so, we open the door to a vast audience of people around the world searching for wisdom to help them navigate the tough realities of life.

In 2019, the reach of CAC programs expanded further than ever before. The set of programs—grounded in the Christian traditions of action and contemplation—range from free and accessible Daily Meditations to an application based two-year formation program for anyone around the world.

A specific highlight in 2019 was the launch of our first podcast with Richard Rohr, titled *Another Name for Every Thing*, which went straight to the top of the charts.



Fr. Richard recording in the Julian of Norwich Hermitage with podcast hosts Paul Swanson and Brie Stoner, Producer Corey Pigg and Sound Engineer Paul Thomson.

*Social Media  
Community continues  
to grow*



*First time RR on the  
NYT best-seller list*



*Resource Center sales  
continue to grow*



*Daily Meditations  
Community continues  
to grow*



*First CAC Podcast at  
the top of the charts*



*First Video Trailer for  
The Universal Christ*



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## A GROWING MOVEMENT OF TEACHERS AND LEADERS

In addition to our Core Faculty, CAC had the honor of working with and publishing incredible writers, activists, theologians, and thinkers through our biannual literary journal *Oneing*. We believe that platforming and partnering with an ecology of teachers and leaders who share a common purpose, is a crucial element of creating transformative and sustainable change. Established in 2013, *Oneing* is grounded in Fr. Richard Rohr's teachings and wisdom lineage and each issue features a themed collection of thoughtfully curated essays and critical perspectives from spiritual teachers and prophets of all faith traditions.

Reaching well over 10k units in 2019, we showcased in-depth essays from:

*Beverly Lanzetta*

*Brie Stoner*

*Christena Cleveland*

*Diana Butler Bass*

*Diarmuid O'Murchu*

*Ilia Delio*

*Jamie Manson*

*John Dominic Crossan*

*Archbishop John Charles Wester*

*Kaitlin B Curtice*

*Lee Staman*

*Rev. Canon Nontombi Naomi Tutu*

*Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox*

*Rev. Michael Dowd*

*Sallie McFague*

*Shane Claiborne*

*Shirin McArthur*

*Wesley Granberg-Michaelson*

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## GOING DEEPER WITH LEARNING IN COMMUNITY: CAC'S ONLINE COURSES

Ending the loneliness of the spiritual journey while studying in a curated digital community.

CAC's 7-14 week online courses support sincere students, together with other spiritual companions, discover opportunities for transformation through the study of the Christian contemplative path. By guiding students, knowledgeable spiritual practitioners add value to the online course forums. These online courses—made possible by the investments in our technology infrastructure—are accessible by students all around the world.

Each year our course catalog continues to grow. In 2019, a total of 7,327 people studied in one of CAC's six online courses.

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## LARGEST CONFERENCE IN CAC HISTORY: MARCH 28-31, 2019



### *The Universal Christ: Another Name for Every Thing*

Jacqui Lewis, Janet McKenzie, and John Dominic Crossan joined Richard Rohr and over 2,000 people from all around the world at the Albuquerque Convention Center for an incredible four day conference. Another 2,956 people participated via the live-webcast around the world.



“To be a Christian is to see Christ in every one and every thing.”

—Richard Rohr



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## THE LIVING SCHOOL FOR ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

Our signature formation program continues to evolve and expand to help students deepen engagement with their true self and with the world. With the addition of Dr. Holmes and Brian McLaren to the core faculty, the school continues to progress and develop. 2019's Living School Symposium had powerful new sessions, including a *Centering the Margins Ritual*, as well as experiences inspired by Paulo Freire's work: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The development of these experiences was heavily supported by Program Design team members Darleen Ortega, Cliff Berrien and Gigi Ross.

Since 2013, over 1k students have been “sent” (graduated) from the school.

**“The Living School is a beautiful expression of the CAC's maturing identity and dynamic faithfulness to its originating vision. With an amazing young leadership team now in place and fully co-creating this school, the future seems hopeful indeed.”**

**—Cynthia Bourgeault**

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## UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

The path of transformation is modeled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, not as a one-time anomaly, but as the regular and universal structure of reality revealed in one person. The Living School curriculum includes classic texts from the contemplative tradition that bring forward the key insights from our lineage. Students are asked to develop a “Rhythm of Life” that is a commitment to a set of core practices to ground this cycle of personal transformation and carry the work into daily life.

The spiritual journey is marked by our continual movement from egoic safety through egoic death and into egoic surrender to Ultimate Reality/Love, which results in new ways of understanding and being in the world. This repeating path is ever deepening and lifelong.

The Living School faculty often refer to this cycle as Order, Disorder, Reorder.



Fr. Richard Rohr, Dr. Cynthia Bourgault and Dr. Jim Finley at the 2019 Living School Symposium.



*Order*

We begin by ordering our lives around our finite self which is caught in an illusion of separateness from Love. The finite self focuses on separateness, survival, and self-sufficiency.

*Disorder*


An encounter with great love or great suffering exposes the limitations of the finite self and is experienced as suffering. We either consent to this experience in faith — leaving us open to the process of transformation — or return to the ordering around the finite self.

*Reorder*

A mysterious and graced experience of God's presence can be tasted and increasingly frees the will to be aligned with God's will for the love and healing of the world.

*Love/Ultimate Reality*

There is an Ultimate Reality (God or Love) manifest in all things. This love is the engine for and destination of our transformation.



“The point of the Christian life is ... to stand in radical solidarity with everyone and everything else. This is the full, final, and intended effect of the incarnation—symbolized by its finality in the cross, which is God’s great act of solidarity instead of judgement. Without a doubt, Jesus perfectly exemplified this seeing, and thus passed it on to the rest of history.”

—Richard Rohr

We do not seek spiritual awareness to help us escape our own pain but to gain a capacity to feel the pain of the world and live in solidarity with it.

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## EXPANDING OUR TEAM

The Mission of the CAC is to “open the door” for a critical mass of spiritual seekers to experience the transformative wisdom of the Christian traditions of action and contemplation and nurture its emergence in service to the healing of our world. There is a great need for this in the world right now, and for people who have done the necessary work to ground compassionate action in contemplative, non-dual consciousness. To meet the growing needs in our world, we continue to build an increasingly robust and capable team that is committed to using their gifts to bring forward our work to new people in new ways.

In 2019 we were blessed with incredible new additions to our board, staff, and executive team.



2019 Board of Directors and Executive Leadership in Albuquerque NM. Back Row (from left to right): Doug Murrell (COO), Wally Goulet, Jack Willome (Vice Chair), Don Samuels, Damien Faughnan, Drew Jackson, Chris Ferebee. Front Row: Richard Rohr (Founder), Christian Peele, Heidi Franklin (Treasurer), LaVera Crawley (Chair), Michael Poffenberger (Executive Director), Phileena Heuertz. Not pictured: Alexie Torres-Fleming (Secretary)

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## STAFF



CAC Staff in Albuquerque NM, November 2019

### **Executive team members:**

Michael Poffenberger, *Executive Director*

Doug Murrell, *Chief Operations Officer* (new in 2019)

Tisha Ford, *Managing Director of Production and Outreach* (new in 2019)

Cindy Kroll, *Managing Director of Finance & Business Analytics* (new in 2019)

Kirsten Oates, *Managing Director of Program Design and Teacher Relations*

Ananda Robie, *Managing Director of Digital Product*

Patricia Salwei, *Managing Director of Organization and People Development*

“The talent that CAC has assembled is simply remarkable. In my role as COO, I facilitate the use of our collective talent towards a shared outcome of navigating our constituents along a path of personal transformation through the transfer of wisdom and the embodiment of service. Grounded in tradition, our team demonstrates a resilience and brilliance fit to meet any uncertainty the future can bring. #BringIt”

—Doug Murrell

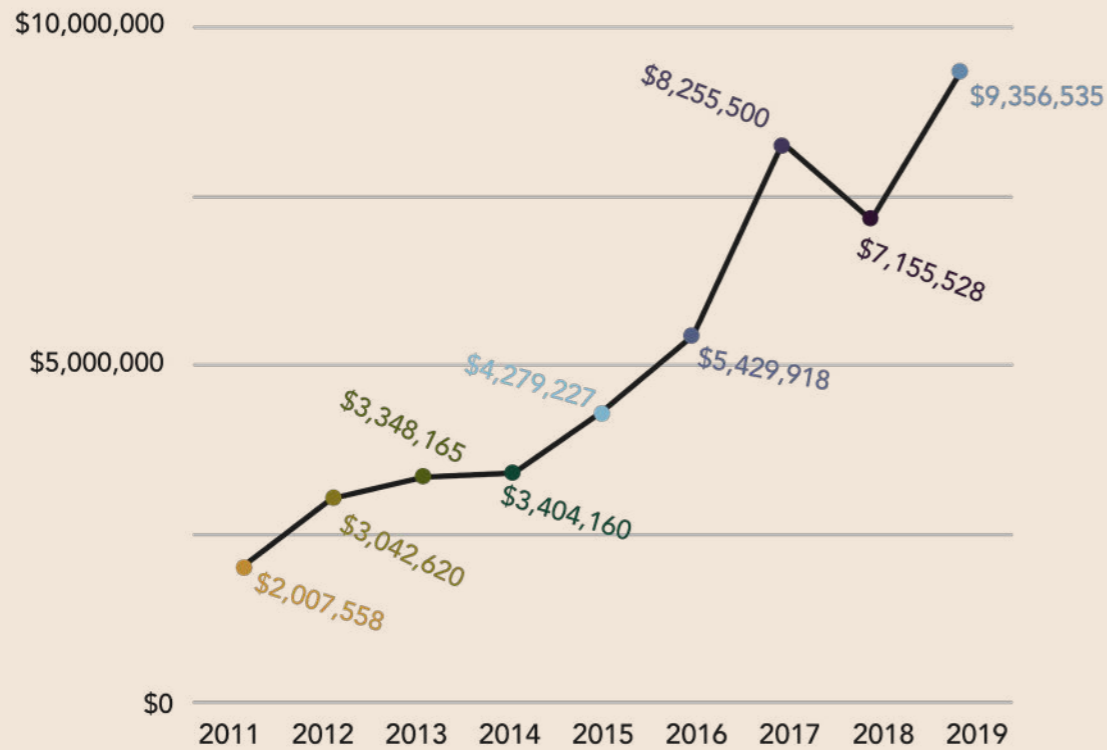
“Basically, what needs to happen to have a Gospel attitude toward money is we must switch from a worldview of scarcity to a worldview of full abundance. As many have said, there is more than enough for our need but never enough for our greed. In the midst of the structural stinginess and over-consumption of our present world, how do we change consciousness and operate from mercy and graciousness?”

—Richard Rohr

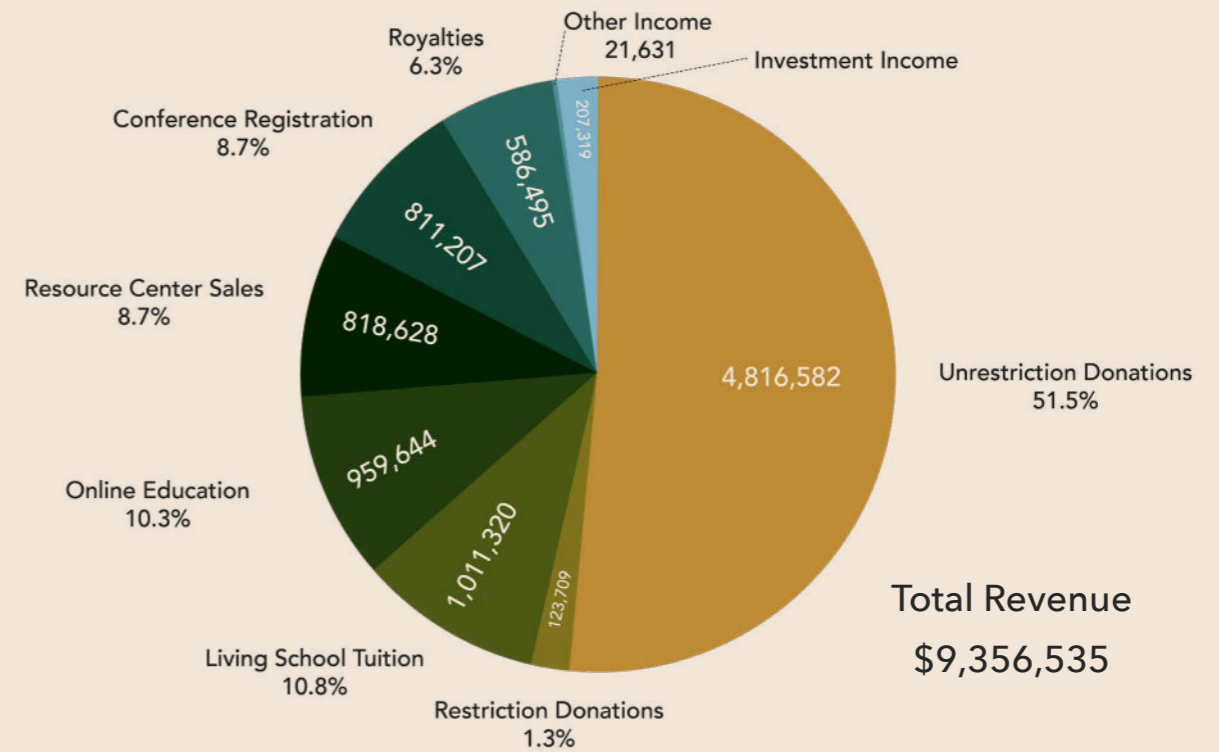
Our budgeting philosophy holds the CAC to high standards of sustainable and responsible stewardship. We work to steward our resources to serve our mission to help create a more loving world. We are working extensively with Fr. Richard to develop a comprehensive framework on how our values translate into specific financial principles and fiscal policies.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Revenue Growth



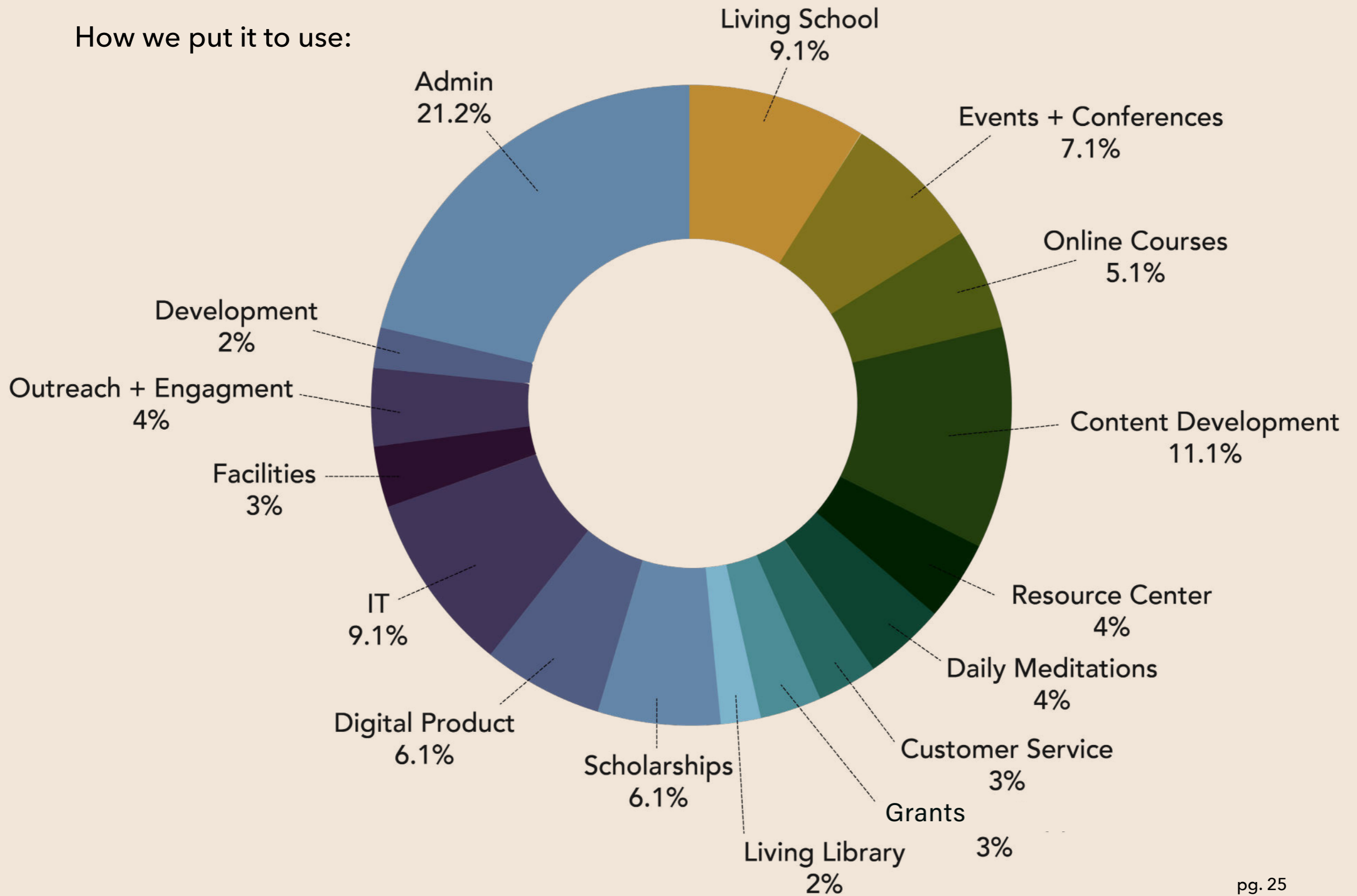
2019 Income \*



\*Our annual independent audit was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was not completed at the time of publishing this annual report. Therefore, these FY2019 numbers may change slightly upon the completion of our annual audit. Thank you for understanding.



How we put it to use:





“Mature Christianity is an invitation to share in the personal life of God, a dynamic of generated love forever continued in space and time through God’s creatures. Thus, God’s self-knowledge includes knowledge of us, and God’s self-love includes love of us. They are the same knowing, the same loving, and the same freedom.”

—Richard Rohr

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## Building on the Foundation Together

The work of the Center for Action and Contemplation is possible only because of friends and supporters like you. CAC is not sustained by any large institution, foundation, or corporation; we exist because of thousands of people around the world who participate and give freely because this work has impacted them. To learn more about how to support the CAC or consider making a legacy gift, visit [cac.org/support](http://cac.org/support).



“At this critical moment in history, we have an opportunity. Richard has created a “force field” (to use one of his favorite metaphors), and many of us have been drawn to it. The question we face now is what we will become and build moving forward together. Richard would be the last to want us to turn the CAC in general or the Living School in particular into a monument or museum obsessed with its own institutional survival . . .

His dream, and it's one more and more of us share, is for all of us who are being drawn together to now dream together and keep moving forward together . . . to become and to build.”

—Brian McLaren

