

Religious
Coalition
for Reproductive
Choice



2018
REPORT



MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Attacks on human rights and civil liberties continued in 2018. We bore witness to the mistreatment of sexual assault survivors at the highest levels of government, of immigrant children and families at our Southern border, of LGBTQ people, of women of color, of poor people, and so many others.

At the same time, we heard millions of courageous people lifting their voices in small towns, cities, statehouses, and in the halls of Congress and steps of the Supreme Court building — in defense of survivors and others under attack by this current administration. RCRC has been a prophetic witness on the front lines with partners across the country and in the nation's capital. We marched, held vigils, and joined rallies. We will defend reproductive freedom and dignity and we will not be stopped.

This past year, RCRC expanded our Compassionate Care program to include participants from secular professions for the first time. By broadening the scope of these trainings, we have reached a larger swath of people who now are equipped to provide compassionate caregiving. In the South, where the terrain is often hard to navigate, we've continued the critical work of our Southern Program, forming key partnerships and building up networks of grassroots leaders.

We also upheld our commitment to affirming the sacred work of health clinic staff and changing the public discourse on faith and abortion with our Clinic Blessing program. People of faith have always been at the core of the reproductive freedom and dignity movement, and we need to raise our voices more now than ever.

We boldly claim our solidarity with women of color who are most deeply impacted by this social and political climate that threatens reproductive freedom and dignity.

Moving forward, we will continue to work with RCRC Affiliates and connect with other networks of thousands of religious leaders and activists. Our collective strength will help us to increase our visibility and amplify the voices of people of faith to challenge current policies and practices.

We will be heard in homes, in pews, in pulpits, and in the public square. We will claim our truth, our strength, and our power as people of faith — and we are grateful to have you in the struggle with us!

Rev. Linda Jaramillo
RCRC Board Chair



RCRC PROGRAMS

COMPASSIONATE CARE PROGRAM



RCRC has always prepared clergy to offer pastoral care to people making reproductive decisions. In 2018 we modified that mission to include secular professionals. We recognize that today, people grappling with the impact of reproductive decision-making may seek support from clergy or a range of secular helping professionals.

To include this broader scope of professionals, we renamed the program Compassionate Care. We brought a group of religious and lay leaders and helping professionals together to brainstorm new ideas for the program, and then went on to restructure and update our curriculum and materials. As a result, Compassionate Care began addressing not just decisions about unintended pregnancy but also the impact of reproductive losses—present or past—such as infertility, stillbirth, adoption, or abortion.

The program, held in conjunction with local partners like RCRC affiliates and/or local grassroots groups, emphasizes cultural sensitivity and providing non-judgmental compassion and companionship to people seeking spiritual, social, and emotional support. Participants have been deeply touched by the trainings. Some from secular professions have also been impressed to find members of faith communities who affirm reproductive choice as an individual's decision of conscience.

SOUTHERN PROJECT



RCRC is taking action to build networks of informed and committed support in the particularly hostile atmosphere surrounding reproductive health, rights, and justice in the South. In 2018, we formed a partnership with *Faith in Women*, a network of faithfully pro-choice leaders in Mississippi.

Together we put on a Compassionate Care training and hosted a dynamic convening highlighting RCRC's roots in the Clergy Consultant Service (CCS) and our ongoing work in the same prophetic spirit. The convening inspired and motivated new people to carry on our mission, offering personal recollections and insights by Rev. Bill Kirby, a former CCS minister, and historical perspectives from Dr. Gillian Frank, a religious history scholar who is writing a book about the CCS.

CLINIC BLESSINGS



For several years now, RCRC has performed blessing ceremonies at healthcare centers that provide abortion services. We do so to recognize these spaces as sacred, and to offer affirmation, comfort, and healing to people who routinely are demonized by anti-choice foes—people who give abortion care and also those who receive it. These ceremonies also generate valuable news coverage showing the public just what it means to be both pro-faith and pro-choice.

In 2018, we held a clinic blessing at the Bethesda, MD, clinic, where Dr. Leroy Carhart is one of few physicians in the country to provide abortions later in pregnancy. Clergy, clinic staff, and laypeople offered prayers, songs, reflections, and a ritual sprinkling of water throughout the clinic spaces. Letters read aloud from Dr. Carhart's patients revealed the wrenching experiences many of them faced, and the solace they gained through their care at the clinic. Unbiased media coverage by the *Washington Post*, syndicated in many other newspapers nationwide, carried our message to millions that people of faith can honor the decision to abort late in pregnancy, when it is what a pregnant person believes is the best choice for their well-being.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY



As abortion foes gained ground in the Trump administration during 2018, RCRC fought back by increasing the visibility and volume of our message.

RCRC members joined the Women's March in cities like Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas, and Hartford, CT. Throughout the year we seized many other opportunities to demonstrate with our allies on behalf of reproductive freedom and intersectional issues such as immigration and sexual harassment, in Washington, DC and around the nation.

Joining with allies such as *Faith in Public Life* and *National Council of Jewish Women*, we held an interfaith vigil in the Hart Senate Office Building as the nomination process of Justice Brett Kavanaugh unfolded. Rev. Cari Jackson also spoke at a major rally outside of the Supreme Court during the tumultuous Kavanaugh proceedings.

During the midterms elections, we encouraged civil engagement and voter education with our online campaign, RCRC Vote, offering nonpartisan information about topics such as voter registration, voter suppression, and how voting reflects our values.

All year long, we worked with journalists to provide information and interviews, yielding placements in news outlets such as *Newsweek*, *Huffington Post* and *Rewire.News*, and growing our following on Facebook, Twitter, and other avenues.

WITH GRATITUDE

CONGREGATIONS

Unitarian Universalist Women of
Greater Lynn, MA

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
Sisterhood, MD

Unitarian Universalist Church of
Evansville, IN

Kings Highway United Methodist
Church, NY

Temple Sinai Women of Reform
Judaism, DC

Unitarian Universalist Women's
Connection, IL

FOUNDATIONS

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Green

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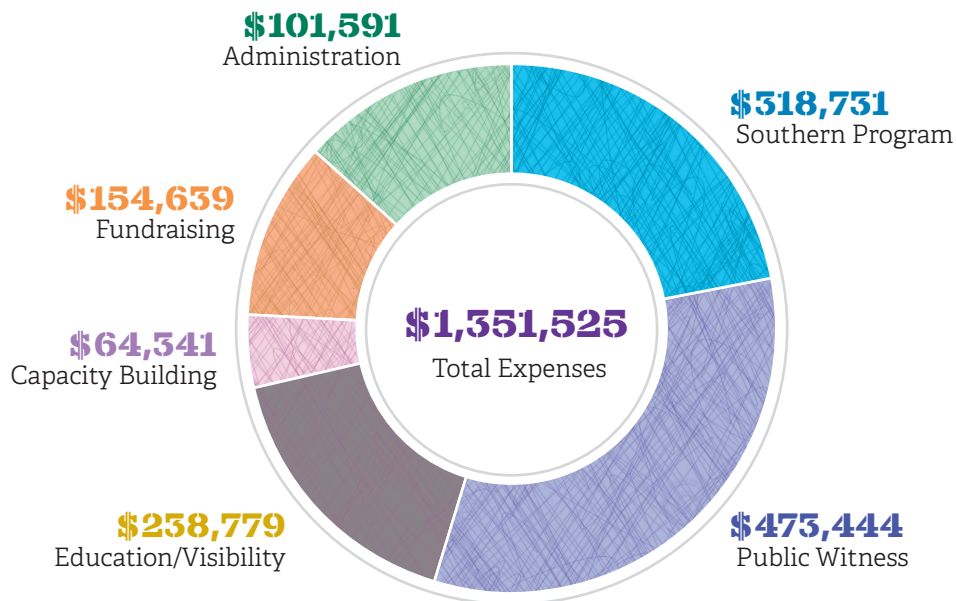
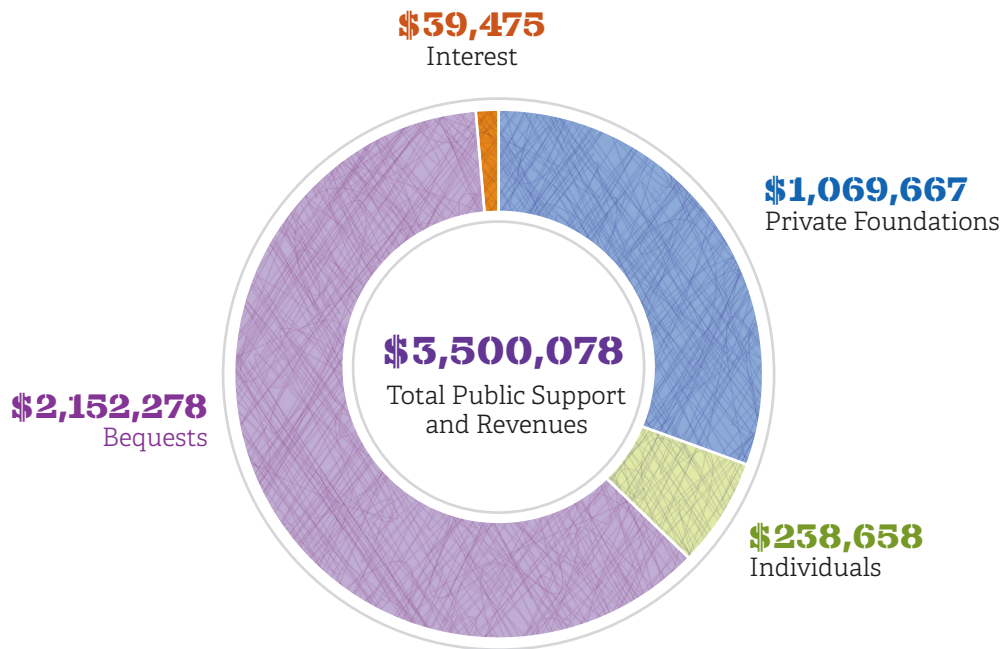
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2018

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The following organizations served as the founding members of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

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American Jewish Congress	Rabbinical Assembly
Anti-Defamation League	Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Catholics for Choice	Society for Humanistic Judaism
Central Conference of American Rabbis	Union for Reform Judaism
Disciples for Choice	Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Episcopal Church	Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Episcopal Women's Caucus	United Church of Christ
Jewish Reconstructionist Movement	United Methodist Women
Jewish Women International	Women of Reform Judaism
Lutheran Women's Caucus	Women's League for Conservative Judaism
Methodist Federation for Social Action	
Metropolitan Community Church	
NAAMAT USA	
National Council of Jewish Women	
Presbyterian Mission Agency	

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1413 K Street NW, 14th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
www.rcrc.org | 202.628.7700