

The Conversation and Religion News Service to continue Global Religion Journalism Initiative with the Associated Press

January 25, 2021

The Conversation (TC) and Religion News Service (RNS) announced today that they will continue to work with the Associated Press (AP) through a collaborative effort, the Global Religion Journalism Initiative.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is making grants to TC and to the Religion News Foundation (RNF), which supports RNS, to fund the initiative. The two-year grants will help TC and RNS continue their work providing global religion news coverage with AP.

The two grants, totaling \$6.4 million, will enable the three organizations to extend and expand the initiative, which was launched in 2019 with Lilly Endowment funding.

“Lilly Endowment is pleased to help these outstanding media organizations enhance and expand their religion coverage,” said Christopher Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “We believe that fair and accurate reporting on the impact of religion, both good and bad, in the United States and around the world is essential.”

Through the initiative, the news organizations are working to increase significantly the volume and reach of high-quality news stories about religious faith and practice and the impact of religion in the U.S. and around the world.

“The Conversation is grateful to Lilly Endowment for the opportunity to continue this historic collaboration with AP and RNS,” said Bruce Wilson, Chief Innovation and Development Officer at The Conversation.

“We’re thrilled to continue this significant initiative,” said Deborah Caldwell, CEO and Publisher of Religion News Service. “Thanks to Lilly Endowment and its understanding of the crucial role religion plays in major events and in the everyday experiences of people of faith, RNS, TC and AP will continue to build on expertise in religion journalism and produce stories describing faith, worship, and practice -- while also reporting behind the scenes on the roles religion plays in our daily life.”

“We are delighted to be working with The Conversation and Religion News Service in this second phase of funding from Lilly Endowment,” said AP Deputy Managing Editor Sarah Nordgren. “This collaboration will continue to help us deepen our coverage of religion and its impact in ways that expand the public’s understanding of religion’s role around the world.”

“Our work with AP and RNS since 2019 has laid the groundwork to cover this important topic for newsrooms across the U.S. that have lost journalists at alarming rates,” said Beth Daley, Editor and General Manager of The Conversation. “The Conversation’s unique model of journalism, where our editors commission scholars to write articles on topics on which they are experts, will help ensure coverage of religion that plays such important cultural and political roles in our society.”

About The Conversation

The Conversation US is an independent source of commentary and analysis from the academic and research community, delivered directly to the public. A team of professional editors work with academic scholars to unlock their knowledge to then be shared with the wider public. Access to trusted, independent, high quality, authenticated, explanatory journalism is critical to a functioning democracy. Our goal is to promote better understanding of current affairs and complex issues leading to a better quality of public discourse. Visit theconversation.com/us.

About Religion News Service

Religion News Service (RNS) is an independent, nonprofit source of global news on religion, spirituality, culture and ethics, reported by a staff of professional journalists. Founded in 1934, RNS informs readers with objective reporting and insightful commentary, and is relied upon by readers, listeners and viewers in the United States and around the world. Visit religionnews.com.

About AP

The Associated Press is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. Visit www.ap.org

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion. In addition to strengthening the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations throughout the United States, the Endowment's grantmaking in religion aims to support fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the U.S. and across the globe. Visit lillyendowment.org

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