

THE CONVERSATION

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The Conversation US To Be Part of New Global Initiative for Reporting on Religion, Ethics and Spirituality

\$4.9 Million Lilly Endowment Grant Funding Effort with Religion News Service and The Associated Press

BOSTON (April 24, 2019) – The Conversation US, Religion News Service (RNS), The Religion News Foundation (RNF) and The Associated Press (AP) are creating a global religion journalism initiative to grow and strengthen religion, ethics and spirituality news reporting in the United States and around the world, funded by an 18-month, \$4.9 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. It is one of the largest investments in religion journalism in decades.

The funds will allow the establishment of a joint global religion news desk aimed at providing balanced, nuanced coverage of major world religions, with an emphasis on explaining religious practices and principles behind current events and cultural movements. Each organization retains editorial control of its respective content, which will be labeled and distributed by AP.

“Thanks to the Lilly Endowment, The Conversation can now expand the coverage we give to ethics and religion, which is one of our eight areas of editorial focus,” said Bruce Wilson, chief innovation and development officer of The Conversation. “Through this collaboration with the AP, RNF and RNS, The Conversation can bring our fresh insights to an even wider range of audiences across the country and globally.”

The Conversation US, an independent, nonprofit publisher of explanatory journalism and analysis sourced from academic experts, will work with scholars to provide readable content about religion, spirituality and ethics for the general public. The Conversation’s content is shared for free through a Creative Commons license – and through AP – with a wide and diverse network of hundreds of republishers in the U.S. and beyond.

Staffed by journalists from AP and RNS, a subsidiary of RNF, and editors from The Conversation, the global religion news desk will produce multiformat religion journalism intended to improve general understanding and analyze the significance of developments in the world of faith.

As part of the initiative, AP will add eight religion journalists; RNS will add three religion journalists; and The Conversation will add two editors to cover religion, ethics and spirituality. Additional business staff will also be hired across the organizations.

“The Global Religion Journalism Initiative grant fundamentally transforms religion journalism in the U.S. and globally,” said Thomas Gallagher, president and CEO of the Religion News Foundation and CEO and publisher of RNS. “It is deeply affirming and humbling to be entrusted with this important grant, especially at a time when competent, reliable, professional religion journalism is needed now more than ever.”

“This collaboration significantly expands AP’s capacity to explore issues of faith, ethics, and spirituality as a social and cultural force,” said AP Vice President and Managing Editor Brian Carovillano. “We are delighted to be working with these organizations to produce meaningful religion journalism that will help inform audiences across the globe.”

The grant is part of Lilly Endowment’s support for efforts that strengthen the public understanding of religion. Grants have helped fund other media projects, including RNF’s support for RNS and documentaries about religious leaders and traditions.

“This collaborative initiative among RNF, The Associated Press and The Conversation is groundbreaking and demonstrates significant promise to strengthen both the volume and quality of religion news reporting,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “We are excited that the initiative will help to ensure that fair and accurate news coverage about religion will reach broad audiences and increase understanding about the role of religious faith in shaping national and international events.”

About The Conversation US

[The Conversation US](#), an independent nonprofit, launched in October 2014 to democratize knowledge for the public good. A team of professional editors works with academic scholars to unlock their knowledge through explanatory journalism and analyses that are then shared with the public for free. 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.