<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RfR Organizational Chart</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from the President</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from the Executive Director</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Helpline Project</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RfR Library</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Online Community</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Programming</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Support Groups Project</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Secular Therapy Project</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blog</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fall Excursion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassador Project</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and Social Media</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RfR 3.0</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Project</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Recovering from Religion experienced dynamic growth and change in 2021, and its accomplishments were significant, expansive, and functional. As we continued the time of isolation due to the national pandemic, we fully evaluated our programs, continued our Local Support Groups as virtual meetings, observed the status of the virus as it affected staff travel and conference attendance, and examined where we might capitalize upon social restrictions to continue to help those seeking us out.

RfR began 2021 with the following fully operational projects: The Secular Therapy Project, The Helpline Project, The Support Groups Project, the Blog Ex-Communications (hosted at Medium, a change for 2021), RfRx, the Ambassador Program, our Volunteer Library, our Online Community, and the Fall Excursion, along with the supporting framework of Volunteers, Resources, Social Media/Marketing, Revenue/Fundraising/Grants, and IT.

This year we have added our International Development Program, which includes an expansive Australia Development Plan, details of which can be found elsewhere in this document. Another project in development is the RfR Book Project.

In 2021, we continued our structural project, RfR 3.0, to integrate cutting-edge technology, graphic design, and functionality to our existing network.

Recovering from Religion’s effectiveness has been remarkable. No other organization provides international religion-recovery support as RfR does with excellence and innovation.
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Dr. Darrel Ray

I am happy to say that RfR survived the pandemic stronger than ever with a deeper bench of talent and training among our wonderful volunteers. RfR is a continual work-in-progress. Whether our IT systems, our training program, or our international initiatives, there is always something growing and changing.

Covid was a proverbial kick in the pants that got us moving in new directions as we sought to serve our clients in many different ways and in many different countries. We were very fortunate to see our donations and donors increase throughout this time even as the pandemic created more trauma and uncertainty for those who need us. Our donor base has put us on the strongest financial footing we have experienced in our 13-year history. We can fund our programs and expansion efforts without worrying about whether we can pay our bills.

We have not been sitting on our hands during this pandemic. Our Volunteers and Board of Directors have worked to complete the RfR 3.0 redesign and development that was so badly needed for us to support the higher volume of clients. Board member Gwen B. led the team, but there were many on the IT team who made it all possible. At the same time, one of our long-time IT experts, Dan C., did a complete redesign of our Resources library, making our resources much more accessible and easy to use for both volunteers and clients. This was a major upgrade and a contribution to the secular world as a whole. The secular community has never had this kind of information and resources at their fingertips.

Even though we were locked down, we were still able to organize our international expansion. Board member Sherrie D. among many others has opened up Australia and New Zealand with new teams on the ground working to provide hope, healing, and support. We also have a new Spanish language team working to open up Latin American and other Spanish-speaking countries to the services and resources of RfR.

With a break in the pandemic, we were able to hold our Fall Excursion in North Carolina in September. A February fundraiser, led by Ethan Micheal with the help of dozens of podcasters, helped us raise over $10,000 to subsidize the Fall Excursion and make it possible for over 70 people to attend. We have come to see this singular event as not only an amazing opportunity for healing our clients, but also a wonderful way for our volunteers and Board to connect and develop relationships that last throughout the year.
Eric W. started our online RfRx program at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, as a way to serve our clients during lockdown. Surprisingly, it developed into its own stand-alone program with regular attendance of 80-120 each week. The quality of RfRx speakers and programs would rival some of the best anywhere in the secular world.

As we see with many of our efforts, we create things like the Excursion or RfRx for one purpose, and then see the program take on a life of its own, expanding the vision far beyond its original purpose. That seems to happen regularly with our programs, so much so that we have come to see it as a natural outgrowth of having such enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers.

With the completion of many of the RfR 3.0 goals, we are beginning to focus on other IT initiatives, including upgrades to the Secular Therapy Project, which continues to function very well, but can always use some improvements. At the end of 2021 we had 572 vetted therapists in our database, and 27,776 clients. The STP is now 10 years old, and has become a well-known and much-used resource for the entire secular community.

Finally, it is easy to overlook the fact that the vast majority of our service and work is done by those who answer our chats and calls every day of the year. This effort is the heart and soul of RfR. It requires hundreds of volunteers and tens of thousands of hours. Underpinning this effort are volunteers that train and coach every new volunteer. Glend, Daniel, Rachel, Tania, Rob, Chip, Ed, and so many more have dedicated their time and intelligence to ensuring our clients get the best possible service from our Helpline Agents.

I could write so much more in praise of everyone who makes RfR work. I can’t begin to name everyone but if you are reading this, as a volunteer or as a donor, thank you for all you did in 2021 to make what you see in this report possible.
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Gayle Jordan

Recovering from Religion continues to be the premier resource for people who are seeking assistance as they journey through doubt and nonbelief. What started as a germ of an idea in the compassionate and sensitive mind of Dr. Darrel Ray in 2009 has today become the preeminent resource for those struggling with doubt and non-belief. 2021 found RfR launching into a new decade with ideas, innovation, and energy to match the massive need that lies before us.

Taking advantage of cutting-edge technology and current science and research, we continue to refine and expand our ability to communicate with clients, and offer resources to all members of our ever-growing community of clients.

*Telephone Calls* provide a reassuring voice of reason and encouragement.

*Internet Chats* provide a secure and private space to work through troubling doubts and fractured relationships.

Relationships are forged and developed within our protected *Online Community*.

Genuine friendships are made and strengthened in our *Local Support Groups*.

Books, websites, podcasts, and videos are conveniently located in our vast collection of *Resources*.

Enlightening personal stories of struggles and victories are shared on our *Blog*.

Fascinating presentations of substance are shared on the weekly online production of *RfRx*.

Friendships, workshops, and a weekend of reflection and growth can be had at our retreat-setting, *Fall Excursion* weekend religion-recovery event.

*Social Media* has become an incredibly important avenue for us to reach those folks who need our services, particularly those in isolated and religious areas.

Regional and local events are served by our *Ambassadors*, specially-trained volunteers who represent RfR by speaking and tabling.

As I travel and speak on behalf of Recovering from Religion, I continue to be amazed on multiple fronts: the urgent need for the type of services we provide, the selflessness and devotion of our volunteers, and the kindness and generosity of our supporters.
Almost all of the goals for the Helpline described in the Strategic Plan for 2021 were completed! While we wanted to have much of the volunteer management app and automatic generation of chat / call statistics completed by this year, those are now next on the list with the first release of the new chat app being complete.

With the three helpline leadership roles beyond the Helpline Director being well established (self-paced trainers, one-on-one trainers, and hero supporters) there are now coordinators for each of these roles. That is, a self-paced training coordinator, one-on-one training coordinator, and hero supporters coordinator.

All of these leadership roles including the coordinator roles have been documented in the Helpline google drive. These coordinators have led their respective Helpline leaders well and have made my duties more spontaneous rather than routine. With the helpline leadership doing the bulk of the work, my duties have primarily been responding to messages to address novel concerns, provide clarification on duties / protocol, being the one to make the final decision when the right choice is not entirely clear etc.

These duties can be summarized into “leading the leaders” and have required thinking out of the box to handle new situations as compared to performing established duties. This has been much less time consuming, which has opened up more of my volunteer time to working on improving the helpline’s technology. The Helpline Director role, for me, has informally evolved into a dual role of managing the Helpline as it is at a high level while making plans and delegating tasks for creating web apps to improve the experience of both agents and clients. Since I’m a computer programmer for a living, I’ve also been able to take on some of these software engineering tasks myself in addition to delegating. The dev team has also provided feedback and in that way have contributed to the leadership of the RfR 3.0 project rather than just following instructions. Their creativity in addition to their programming skills have made the Helpline what it is now. I couldn’t be more proud of our team of developers.

One of these web apps is the new chat app! The first release of this new chat app is perhaps the highlight of the Helpline this year. Chats no longer all go into the same place but are separated into Slack threads. So Helpline agents don’t need to type in a chat id for every single message they send but instead just need to send their message in the correct thread. This means that agents only get Slack notifications from the conversations that they are a part of, or in other words, only the chats that they have taken. Not only has it improved on linked chat in general, but is designed to provide
functionally specific to the needs of Recovering from Religion. For example, we have set up our own database, hosted on the same remote machine as the app. This will provide us the data to automatically collect chat statistics and generate graphs instantly, removing the need of a human volunteer to perform chat data collection and saving a lot of headache.

Along with the release of the new chat app, we have additionally made progress on the volunteer management app. This web app, as far as the Helpline is concerned, will remove much of the monotonous tasks performed by the self-paced trainers. However, this app is intended to also eliminate much of the labor performed by our Volunteer Coordinator. We have met with the Volunteer Coordinator and created a meticulous design with her approval. This design will guide us as we write the code to make it a reality. But we have also already begun writing some code as well. We have a login system ready for review that integrates with a Slack workspace. This uses the login capability already provided by Slack so we can be more assured that it’s secure than if we implemented our own login process.

This means that the app connects to Slack and verifies that its user is a valid member of one of the RfR workspaces before providing access to the app. This is unlike the chat app, which is public to everyone. The volunteer management app, however, is only intended to be used by our volunteers and will provide access to sensitive information such as volunteer data. We also don’t want just anyone manipulating our volunteer database (which will replace the cumbersome spreadsheets we’ve been using). Therefore, implementing the Slack login procedure is an important step moving forward. But beyond that we also have a functional main menu which links to other pages that will provide the truly useful features. These include editing email templates for an automated email system, instantly generating a monthly volunteer report, and providing a more tidy and efficient place for interviewers to enter their interview results.
Helpline 2022 Goals

- Improved tracking of missed calls and a more customer-service like experience for the client (i.e. their chat doesn’t begin until an Agent responds so they don’t waste time or emotional energy writing out an initial message just for it to be missed, the chat is automatically marked as missed in our chat database if an Agent doesn’t respond)
- Tracking missed and taken chats in our chat database and automatic generation of chat statistic charts displayed in a web browser via our volunteer management web app and retirement of the data collecting volunteer position
- Improved chat and call tracking via an updated Helpline report which asks specific questions about the chat/call itself (as compared to merely tracking which chats/calls were missed and which were taken) that can be quantified and plotted in graphs
- Automatically tracking call statistics and generating charts similar to chats but using the Slack API which contains Yodel’s data as compared to our own chat database
- Automatic blocking of Trolls and BOSHs by tracking IP addresses. Agents could add IPs of trolls / BOSHs in the new helpline report
- Automatic blocking of chatters from muslim majority countries who will get a message requesting them to connect to a VPN before they are allowed to chat
- Schedule-a-chat feature similar to our schedule-a-call mechanism
- Automated emails to prospective Agents and automatically adding them to the Helpline Slack workspace performed by our volunteer management app server
- Establishing a database accessible via our volunteer management server which contains volunteer data and ability to manage this data in a web interface (volunteer management website) specialized to the purposes of RfR. Should replace the volunteer master file and helpline agents spreadsheet
- Automatic emails to inactive volunteers via the helpline management app server that provides a form for them to explain why they left (statistics on that)
RfR Library - John and Steve - Managers

The RfR Library has functioned as a repository for hundreds of resource materials for Agents to reference and use as they interact with clients since October 2020. Thanks goes to Dan Cancro, along with a few others, who helped Steve and I load up the Library material during its initial build.

Currently there are 126 trained agents (*63 this time last year*) that have logged into these resources of 105 channels of topics. That's a 100% increase from this time last year.

There are two channels 1) #gayles-coffee-bar, to generally chat, and 2) #library-curators, where members can make suggestions for inclusion into the Library for their suggestions to be evaluated by the Library Curators. All other channels are bookshelves for resource material only.

This resource has served us well for over 16 months and we are pleased that this has been the catalyst for a new form of Resource Directory that the Resource Director could use to extract his data.

This Library was purposely created purely for fully-trained Agents only, to use with clients.

This chart shows the level of activity by Agents this last year.

**Green** = Weekly Active Members.

**Blue** = Members who posted comments, generally in the #library-curators channel.

The lower graph shows messages from members are basically zero.
Active members

See how many people are active – meaning that they’ve posted, messaged or made at least one channel or direct message.

Weeks vs Daily

Messages and files

Learn how information is shared in your workspace.

Messages sent

Files uploaded

Messages from members
Assistant Director: Tania (Marie Curious)

Tania has joined us this year as an Assistant Director, which we have felt to be a great asset to the OC as she also has responsibilities within the Helpline as a Hero Supporter/Trainer, and so gives us additional feedback as members transition from their training into the Online Community.

Slack Membership Change

Being a Non-profit organization Derek Klein suggested RfR might now meet the requirements to upgrade its status with Slack, free of charge. We pursued that with Slack and they granted us a free upgrade in the OC, and the Library, which now means we have unlimited messages and nothing gets placed in an archive.

Membership

The RfR Online Community continues to grow. As of today, we have a total of 2079 members that have been invited and accepted to the Online Community. This is up 654 from last year’s 1425. This number does of course include trained Agents that have also migrated across both Slack platforms. Also bear in mind that the figure of 2079 (though many now inactive, hopefully due to RfR having served its purpose in aiding recovery) means that they have access to continuing help should they pursue it.
Most of those invited to the OC have come via the Helpline Volunteer Team recommending the OC to them. Once in the Community, they then self-select the community channel(s) with which they best identify for their recovery. The OC is primarily peer supported, where our clients can share their personal stories and resources that they found helpful with others. Due to some channels not being as active as others, and with a view of reducing the number of channels, we amalgamated the Baptist and Catholic channels into the Christian channel. Although clients request to join they don’t always accept, as can be seen by the following charts:
Clients requesting to join the Online Community vary each month as can be seen by the following graphs.
We had one change to a channel title during 2021:

**Australasia:**
This channel used to be the “Australia” channel, but we’ve modified the title to cater for members in New Zealand and any associated South Sea islands.

Channel additions and changes during 2021:

**Share Your Story:**
This channel was established for Kristi Callaway, Blog Editor, on 15th July. We’ve been explaining to clients that recovering from religion is a process, and it can be therapeutic to share their personal deconversion story. Many have chosen to use this channel to write at length about their own journey. We believe it’s been of great benefit to those who have contributed to this channel.

**Self Help Course:**
This channel was created on 30th July and is designed as an interactive, self-paced self-help course and has been established and hosted by Rachel (Spinouette). In this course, clients follow the book "Reclaim Your Life, Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) in 8 Weeks" by Dr. Carissa Gustafson. ACT is an evidence-based secular system that is used by clinical therapists and is also appropriate as a self-help option. It can be helpful for issues such as anxiety, depression, anger, lack of purpose, social problems, and general emotional resilience. 45 members signed up for the course. Getting commitment to see the course through the full 7 weeks has been a challenge. Only a couple have made it to the penultimate final week.

Rachel says

*Many have made it through half of the course though which is quite impressive considering it's more than 8 weeks of a lesson every single day (even weekends.) It’s a lot of content*

She makes a point of

*… supporting people without any pressure. That means that many never start, some drift off and return later, some give up after a while.*

*While I’m somewhat disappointed that more people haven't taken advantage of the entire thing, I do think that it's been helpful for those who have done even part of it.*
We feel that the actual journey can be just as rewarding trying to get to the finishing line even if they don’t complete it.

Rachel has now established all the course work for new members to join at any time and she will tutor and encourage them in an attempt for them to complete the course.

Rachel has also created a “Guided Grounding Exercises” document to help clients with any stress related issues that Rachel has found to help her. This is offered to those who feel it might help them, but on the understanding that we are not trained professionals, and is offered on the basis that we have found it helpful to some of our members.

**Virtual Hangout:**

We changed this channel from being an “invitation only” channel to an open channel that anyone can join. Steve (Ironsides) and Rob Palmer are primarily the hosts of that channel. Most notably this year Steve invited Seth Andrews to join in the Zoom hangout, which was quite a hit. We hope to invite more celebrities in 2022.

**Street Epistemology & Critical Thinking:**

These used to be “Practice Street Epistemology” and “Seeking Answers” channels. Primarily these channels are doing the same thing, but it was felt that the SE channel should not just be dedicated to practicing, but should cover any aspect, or questions, about SE that members might have. It was felt by some members that questions about critical thinking topics should not be part of SE but be directed to another channel. This prompted us to change the title of Seeking Answers to Critical Thinking. A BIG shout-out goes to Albert Alexander and Glen Nicholson for their tremendous contribution to both these channels during this last year.

**#Crossover channel (Helpline)**

With approval from Erik Huckvale we established a new channel in the Helpline that links the Online Community leadership with the Helpline leadership. The Helpline leadership comprises Trainers, Hero Supporters, and Interviewers. This allows us to address any issues that we might be experiencing in the Online Community that could have an effect on those in leadership in the Helpline, and vice versa.

This chart created by Steve Ruggieri (Goldfinch) shows the percentage of Moderators to Clients in the various channels. It lets you see how heavily populated some channels are with Moderators compared to Clients.
This year we saw an increase of 60 newly trained Agents invited to the OC to help out as Moderators. One of those is the daughter of our Executive Director. We disbanded dedicated Agents to individual channels due to the difficulty in keeping channels up-to-date with dedicated volunteers, so every new Agent that comes into the OC acts as a moderator to hone their skills as an Agent while waiting for calls/chats in the Helpline.
We also created a training aid for all moderators called “Moderator Protocols and Guidelines” of which they are asked to study when they join the #Moderator-volunteers channel. Among these guidelines it lists a group of 13 experienced moderators that we call “Moderator Supporters” for the less experienced moderators to call upon for any help they need. Those 13 Mod Supporters, which we would like to give thanks to are:

- Albert Alexander (Albert Alexander)
- April D (April D)
- Goldfinch (Steve)
- Helen Greene (Helen G)
- Ironside (Steve)
- Janis Levin-Gorelick (Shayna)
- Kara G (Kara)
- Kelly (Kelly)
- Lionheart (John)
- Maria Curious (Tania)
- Pagan Abby (Gail)
- Spinouette (Rachel)
- Sandman (Borja Prieto)
- Doug Fir (Chip Kiger) retired

2021 also saw many Agents becoming inactive from dedicating their free time to the Online Community. Our current active Agent total at the end of 2021 is 106, with 111 becoming inactive. An email was sent to every inactive, deactivated member explaining how we miss them and the email explains how they can become active with RfR again whenever they wish to do so.

What exactly does “Our current active Agent total is 106” really mean?

According to the Slack guidelines it means a moderator has:

1. Sent more than 10 messages in any given 7-day period, or……
2. He/she has made more than 9 cursor moves in at least 3 days of a 7-day period. (Example of a cursor move: Reading a message in a channel, creating a post, switching between channels to read messages.
3. Members are seen as being totally inactive in Slack if they haven’t logged on in 90 days.
Goals for 2022

Online Community Policy Manual

We have created our own policy manual (10 pages), which we’d like to submit to the RfR Board for review this year, and get it approved. The manual includes topics such as:

- Our mission
- Values
- Vision
- Purpose
- What you can expect from the online community leadership
- What we expect from volunteers
- Length of service expectations
- Time commitment expectations
- Affiliation responsibilities
- General policies
There is a release and waiver of liability form on the last page that we propose is signed by each volunteer.

Currently it’s in draft but will be submitted early this year.

**RfR Online Community Director Guide**

As Directors we are currently working on a Director Guide that lists our day-to-day involvement for RfR. This is currently in draft form and will be submitted early this year.

**Moderator Retention**

We’d like better retention of Moderators for 2022. Many who finish their Agent training spend a bit of time in the Helpline, and/or they come across to the Online Community with the intentions of using their Agent training, but unfortunately many become totally inactive. I should point out that some very recent Agents coming across from the Helpline have been extremely dedicated and impressive, and if you are here today you know who you are, so a BIG THANK YOU.

Can we keep this dedication going?

How can we resolve losing freshly trained agents so quickly?

Would it help to have “Post Graduate Supporters” 😜 dedicated to following them, and checking in on them during their “residency” to make sure they settle in taking chats/calls and transitioning into the Online Community after their one-on-one interview?

Dr Darrel Ray (18 Jan 2022): “…Compared to even a year ago, I am seeing skill development that is far faster and more complete…”

Perhaps it’s already been resolved. We actually have more new Agents lining up to take chats/calls than I can remember, and coming into the OC.

Is the recent new crop of excellent agents just a fluke?

Will they stay the course, and if you are here listening, please stay?

Is there something in place in the Interviewing/Training program to ensure future Agents understand the need for commitment before even starting to train?
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<tr>
<td>5-Deactivated</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-In Training</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Trained</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Active (Non HL)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Active (Helpline)</td>
<td>136</td>
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635 HELPLINE AGENTS

- 4-In Training: 47%
- 3-Trained: 2%
- 2-Active (Non HL): 3%
- 1-Active (Helpline): 21%
- 5-Deactivated: 27%
What is Online Programming?
–RfRx
–Faces of RfR
–RfR Podcast
–RfR Programs Project

Published onto
–YouTube
–Podcast platforms

RfRx Talks
Bring on guests to discuss topics that affect RfR Clients
–Mental Health challenges
–New worldview challenges
–Religion primers
–Non-profit orgs
Began in March of 2020, every Monday night at 7pm central, 1-2 hours in length (varies on the guest and topic).

RfRx Statistics
91 Total Episodes
50 Episodes in 2021

Attendance
–Total Zoom attendance: 4767
–Total ACD attendance: 392
–Total attendance: 5159
Average show attendance: 103
Attendance is trending UP!
The most well-attended RfRx shows

– *Christian Nationalism: Power, Privilege, & Panic Over the Rise of the Seculars with Seth Andrews* (July 5) - 167 attendees

– *Intermediate Level Street Epistemology with Anthony Magnabosco* (January 25th) - 155 attendees

– *Indoctrination: Ghosts in the Machine with Nate Phelps* (May 3) - 150 attendees

– *The Fallacy of Sin with David Warnock* (April 26) - 149 attendees

– *The Evolution of World Religions with David Fitzgerald* (July 26) - 143 attendees

2021 RfR Show Changes

– Added closed captioning

– Rotated co-hosts for each show

– Troll Smashers!

– New show series - “RfRx Foundation Spotlight”
RfRx Feedback

Via email:

“I’m David. I’ve been an atheist for about 2 1/2 years. I am 55. Been a christian ever since I was told I was.lol. I’m from Newfoundland, Canada. Grew up Pentecostal. Deconstruction, I think, took a lifetime. But accelerated quickly in the last 5 years. Funny thing was, my first cousin and his wife, who were ministers, became atheist around the same time. My wife said that she dropped her belief a couple of months ago, after I came out to her. I want to thank everyone for your help with your videos and good reads. You guys are lifesavers. Love you all!”

RfR Podcast

Podcast Director: Derrick Koehn

Have uploaded all RfRx episodes into feed

–2021 Downloads: 109,000 with a HUGE jump in July
–200-2000 downloads per day
–Downloaded in 160 countries
–Listed on multiple podcast platforms beyond just the US
–60% of the downloads result in one hour or more of listening (which is fantastic)
–4.8 out of 5 stars on Apple Podcasts
–58% of listeners identify as female, 36% male, 3% nonbinary, 3% not specified

Popular Podcast Episodes

–Reclaiming Your Sexuality After Religion with Dr. Darrel Ray (November 29)
–A Non-believer’s Holiday Survival Guide with David Teachout, LMHC (November 15)
–Darwin Does Dewars and Dope: An Evolutionary View of Substance Abuse with Dr. Andy Thomson, MD (November 1)
YouTube

Channel is steadily growing

–Current channel subscribers: 2630
–Subscriber change: +1200 (+24% increase from 2020)
–53% of viewers are subscribers, 47% are not subscribers
–Views: 30,000 (+60% increase from 2020)
–Watch time: 7,800 hours (+122% increase from 2020)
–Average video view duration: 15 minutes 37 seconds (+39% increase from 2020)
–67% of viewers identify as female, 33% male
–97.6% Likes, 2.4% Dislikes
–866 Shares
–50% of viewers are watching on a mobile phone, 37% are watching on a computer
Popular YouTube videos

• RfRx - Religious Trauma: The Negative Impacts of Purity Culture with Christy Lanterman, LPC (June 7, 2021) - 981 views

• RfRx - The Psychology of Religious Trauma with Dr. Darrel Ray & Dr Hector Garcia (April 20, 2020) - 930 views

• RfRx - Intermediate Level Street Epistemology with Anthony Magnabosco (January 25, 2021) - 929 views

• RfRx - Reclaiming Your Sexuality After Religion with Dr. Darrel Ray (May 10, 2021) - 600 views

• RfRx Religion Spotlight - Jehovah’s Witnesses with Lloyd Evans & Sherrie D’Souza (August 24, 2020) - 581 views

Future of Online Programming

RfRx will continue!
–Currently scheduled through April
–Will hit the 2-year anniversary and 100th episode in March!

Faces of RfR to continue

RfR Programs project
THE SUPPORT GROUPS PROJECT - Eric Wells, Director

What are the Support Groups?

Face-to-face meetings (in-person or virtual)

Support Group Leader create a safe space for attendees to share

- Feelings/Emotions
- Trauma
- Doubts
- Experiences

These may be the first time an RfR Client has been able to share these things in the open

At least one 2-hour meeting per month

Each meeting is run by a trained volunteer Support Group Leader (SGL)

Standardized meeting format

Virtual Meetings

A way to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

Virtual Meeting benefits:

- Attendees who can’t otherwise travel to local in-person meetings (due to medical, transportation, distance issues or something else)
- Attendees with no local support group
- SGLs can host meetings from anywhere they have access to the internet
- Virtual Chapters can be (and have been) created without a geographical center
- Inactive chapters (chapters without a trained SGL) have access to virtual meetings in other, nearby active chapters
- New SGLs attend virtual meetings as an integral part of their training
SGL trainers work with new leaders in their first meetings as co-hosts.

When an SGL is unable to host a meeting for whatever reason, another SGL may be available to host the meeting, avoiding the need to cancel the meeting.

Combining meetings from different chapters into one meeting.

**New Support Groups for 2021**

- Salt Lake City, Utah
- Los Angeles, California
- Richmond, Virginia
- Houston, Texas
- Polk County, Florida
- Baltimore, Maryland
- Orange County, California
- Women’s Virtual Chapter
- The Baltic area in Northern Europe
- Perth, Australia

**Neat Stuff for 2021**

- Training, Startup & Hero Support Teams
- Special Support Group Meetings
- Combining Meetings
- #help-wanted Slack channel
- Inactive groups now have support group meetings
- Public Support Group Meeting Calendar
  - [https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org/sg-calendar](https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org/sg-calendar)
- Special support group meetings
- Women’s Virtual Chapter
2021 Chapter Stats
Total support groups: 64
Total active groups: 32
Total inactive groups: 32
New 2021 groups: 10

2021 Meeting Stats
Total number of meetings: 305
Average number of meetings per month: 24.4
Total number of meeting attendees: 2127
Average number of attendees per meeting: 7.0
Total number of NEW attendees: 771
Average number of NEW attendees per meeting: 2.5
2021 MeetUp Stats

Total number of Meetup members across all groups: 9,228 (+55% over 2020)

Total number of active members (visited a group in the last 90 days): 1,619

Number of members who joined in 2021: 3,481

Lifetime number of events hosted: 7,976 (+101% over 2020)

Lifetime number of RSVPs: 27,461 (+106% over 2020)
2022 Challenges

A probable reduction in time volunteers have available
Complete/updating training & policy documents
Empowering the Hero Support team

2022 Goals

Streamline the onboarding & tracking training processes
Cleaning up the Support Groups Meeting Calendar webpage
Experimenting with posting the VC & WVC meetings into the other chapters
Experimenting with posting the Mexico City meeting into some U.S. cities
Encourage other RfR program volunteers to attend support group meetings
Form an LGBTQ+ Virtual Chapter

Conclusion

The Support Group leaders are

AWESOME!
THE SECULAR THERAPY PROJECT -
Dr. Travis McKie-Voerste, Director

The one most important and remarkable thing about the STP is that it just works. This is the tenth anniversary for the STP. Every year since we first started it in 2012, it has seen steady growth from year to year. We owe a huge debt to David Klinge for the hundreds of hours he has dedicated to developing the STP software and maintaining it, and to the IT team which has taken on that role over the last year. The result has been a program that does what clients and therapists need.

Over that time it has become an invaluable resource for the thousands of people who come to RfR for help. Our Helpline Agents recommend the STP many times every day. Even more importantly, virtually every major podcast from the Atheist Experience, Your Friendly Neighborhood Atheist, Talk Heathen to The Thinking Atheist and Holy Koolaid, regularly recommend the STP as well as RfR. How do we know? We hear from our clients things like, “I just heard about you on The Atheist Experience. My last therapist tried to pray with me! I need a secular therapist.” We are happy that the STP has become the “go-to” resource for mental health support in the secular community.

In 2021, 5160 people registered on the STP to find a secular therapist. That is a 23% increase in one year. A total 27,776 people have registered for the STP since its inception. It took us five years to reach 10,000 clients. We hit 20,000 the next three years and 27,776 just 18 months later.

We ended the year with 572 vetted and approved therapists: a growth of 91 therapists from 2021 - 19% growth year over year. In addition, we now have therapists in eight countries and 45 US states. Our analysis shows that the average therapist receives around 5 inquiries per year from the STP. Not all of these become clients, but many do. Our analysis shows that about 2,500 people were able to connect with a therapist through our database.

Due to the pandemic, most therapists had to convert their practices to telehealth services. This has had the effect of making therapy more accessible! People can now talk on a video chat rather than leaving their home. Research has shown that telehealth can meet the needs of a large majority of people. Some will still need face-to-face care, but the pandemic has forced many state licensing boards to loosen their restrictions. This is something we have advocated for years. Far too often state licensing
restrictions impede or even prevent people getting the service they need.

The STP is led by Dr. Travis McKie-Voerste and the vetting team is led by Danny Boylan. In 2022 we are looking to upgrade the system to ensure it is even easier to use, more secure and offers better data to the administrators and STP leaders.
RESOURCES - Dan Cancro

In October, Dan Cancro took over as Resources Director. Dan had been a volunteer with RfR for about a year working on the new chat system and saw an opportunity to improve how RfR delivers useful material to clients.

Under Dan’s direction, the Resources area underwent an evolutionary transformation. The internal library of links used by agents and the existing website pages were combined into a single, public set presented to visitors with a brand new, interactive web application.
This new system will better support self-service of valuable material when agents are unavailable and when visitors choose to browse our curated links on their own. It will also help agents to find and share resources more easily while engaged in a conversation with clients. This change will also help to facilitate extension of RfRs reach into new locations and to people who speak languages other than English.

Plans for 2022 include continued improvements to the new system as well as creation of a new team of volunteers to carefully judge and discuss proposed additions to and removals from the collection. We have begun talks with Alice Greczyn about her offer to donate the resource finding website daretodoubt.org to RfR. If this happens, we will work together to make something better than the sum of its parts.

In 2021, there were 53,896 views of pages under the Resources tab.
THE BLOG: EX-COMMUNICATIONS (now hosted on Medium)
- Kristi Cassidy

About the Blog
We call it a blog - but in truth, it’s a bit closer to an online magazine. It’s called ExCommunications, and we host it on Medium - an online platform for bloggers. We publish personal, informative, and educational stories about the process of leaving religion and the ex-religious experience.

Authors
Our authors have left various religions behind, and each one wishes to share their experiences as a former believer. There are currently 59 who contribute, and this number grows by at least one or two every week. Most weeks we have at least one story submission - and in crazy times we have had multiple submissions per day! Some of our authors are RfR volunteers, but many are not - as they’ve found us through the Medium platform. Medium allows our authors to earn income on the articles they write for us.

Editors
We currently have three editors (including myself). Editors review submissions and publish them as they come in, on a rotating schedule where a new editor takes over at the beginning of each week.

Me!
I’m Kristi, and I manage the blog, along with Recovering from Religion’s account on Medium. I also keep an eye on an email account where we receive story submissions on the regular, and I publish these to ExCommunications from RfR’s Medium account. In addition, there is a channel on our online community called #share_your_story, where people share their deconversion stories. With the permission of the user who shared, I publish stories from this channel to our blog.
Our Purpose

1: Grow RfR’s reach

Medium is a cross between a blogging platform and social media. The social media aspect of Medium has really helped our readership (and the number of authors who contribute to the publication) to grow very quickly. On Medium, it’s possible for an article to be “distributed”, or picked up by the algorithm to be recommended to new readers. When this happens it’s an incredible boost - but it’s very rare. Most of our new readers find us because our authors also write for other publications. One of our articles will appear in the recommendations after an article from another publication, since it is written by the same author, and the new reader will find us that way.

2: Raise awareness of Religious Trauma

The mainstream narrative about religion is that it has an overwhelmingly positive effect on people, and on society. ExCommunications offers a counterpoint to this narrative. Every story told raises awareness of religious trauma, which can help those affected negatively by religion feel more comfortable speaking up or seeking help.

3: Earn income for RfR

It isn’t much, but every bit helps! We’re currently holding pretty steady at about $30 per month from the articles we publish from RfR’s account to the blog. This seems to be an area in which posting on a regular schedule is highly rewarded by Medium - so we really appreciate all the stories people send in via email and through the #share-your-story channel in our online community. It will be exciting to watch this number grow over the coming year.

Highlights of 2021

Popular Articles:
How People From an Uncontacted Island Tribe Made Me Doubt My Faith
"Satan’s last stronghold" lies...

The Ten Commandments Are Not What You Think They Are
Just another example of Biblical ignorance in...
Jesus is Not Coming Back
There is no rescue for evangelical angst

ExCommunications Stats

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RfR’s Top Article:

God’s Morbid Plan for Unvaccinated Christians

My uncle Matt recently died of COVID. He was unvaccinated and in his mid-60s…

Goals for 2022

- Continue with system set up in 2021
- Recruit two more editors
- Be more consistent with RfR posts.
THE FALL EXCURSION - Shanon Nebo, Director

2021 Fall Excursion Report

Cost: $24,972.11
Revenue: $17,286.02
Loss: $7,686.09

Fundraiser: $7,489.58

Volunteer List: (14)

- Darrel
- Barb
- Gayle
- Glenda
- Shanon
- Mark
- David
- Phil
- Shana
- Gwen
- Travis
- Tanya
- Danny
- Bill

Speaker List: (7)

- Mandisa + guest (Cheryl)
- Candace
- Alice Greczyn + Mom
- Dave Warnock + Bevin

Special Guests: (5)

- Ethan + Jessica
- Shanon’s kids (3)
Total Paid Attendees: 39
Total Attendees: 68

Four twin beds and 1 full bed were left unused

**Program:**

- The Psychology of Religious Infection by Darrel Ray
- Group Sessions and Guided Meditation with Candace Gorham (2)
- Support Group Meetings (2)
- Nature Hike with Darrel
- The Causes and Costs of Religion with Travis McKie-Voerste
- The Neuroscience of Mystical Experiences with Alice Greczyn
- Death, Dying, and Disbelief with Candace Gorham
- Secular Sexuality with Darrel Ray
- Karaoke Party with Mandisa
- Creating New Traditions Workshop with Gayle Jordan and Dave Warnock

**Notes:**

- The program was strong. The last minute addition of the support groups went well and all sessions were well attended.
- The food was well-liked, but poorly timed due to the constraints of the facilities. A change in venue with better facilities will fix this issue.
- The kitchen workers need more privacy from attendees.
- Food allergies were handled with room for improvement. It’s best to stick to items that naturally meet needs rather than trying to adapt recipes to allergies.
- The venue was beautiful, but navigating the roads onsite was difficult and an added hardship that affected timing and execution of other tasks. Some of the cabins weren’t guest-ready. Two of the cabins did not have water for the entire event. The venue owner managed this poorly. Attendees were given partial refunds for their hardship and the venue owner begrudgingly agreed to compensate us for that.
- Overall, attendees seemed to enjoy themselves and adapted to the various hardships such as not having water and having to move some of the programming into a tight space to accommodate rain.
● We need to make sure that we have strong policies in place and review them in regards to how people may conduct themselves and be dressed in common spaces.
● Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, especially at the end.

Goals for 2022:

● Timely and easier meal execution: The change in facilities will likely make this much easier.
● Increased revenue: Carefully review this year’s expenses and price registration and lodging accordingly. The pandemic caused many cancellations. Hopefully this will be less of an issue in the future.
● More privacy for attendees and volunteers: The venue change will allow for this.
Our Ambassador Program was inspired by the need to have a presence at local conventions, festivals, and community gatherings. The Board and staff can only attend a limited number of meetings, not to mention the cost to the budget of travel and lodging.

Participating in public events serves several purposes.

–First, it elevates our visibility as the frontline organization to provide hope and healing to those folks struggling with their doubts.

–Second, this visibility sometimes leads to potential partnership opportunities with organizations whose mission is compatible with ours.

–Third, it often connects us with those who wish to join our organization as donors and/or volunteers.

–Finally, it vests our specially-trained volunteers with ownership in our organization, while simultaneously alleviating the burden to the Board and staff to cover all of these opportunities.

We’ve developed a training program that includes a short history of Recovering from Religion, as well as our philosophical approach to outreach. Included in the training are suggestions of possible appearances in addition to in-person events: podcasts, interviews, panels, etc.

We began the Amb program in February 2020 just as Covid hit. The motivation was organically driven out of the need to have a presence at local/regional events (pride festivals, earth days, mental health conferences, etc). We put together extra training, suggestions for events, and a dedicated Slack Team.

We require a commitment to 3 events in 12 months, which is our effort to justify the cost of the tabling package: RfR swag, brochures, table cover, etc.

We hope to return to the concept of in-person events soon.
However, many of our Amb have taken the opportunity to transition to podcast/youtube appearances.

**Highlights of 2021**

Once again, Rob P has been our Ambassador with the most podcast/webinar appearances.
The total number of podcast appearances for the Ambassador team in 2021 was 18, 4 of which were from Australia.

**Goals for 2022**

– The Ambassador program needs a director. We will continue to encourage members of the team to consider this leadership role.
– We would like to have assistance from the tech team to create an Ambassador Badge to be used within Slack, to identify the additional training of each Ambassador.
– When we return to in-person events, we hope to share pictures of our Ambassadors at work, within Slack and on social media.
– We plan to continue to highlight the work the Ambassador team is engaged in by submitting summaries of tabling experiences to the social media/marketing team.
### Volunteer Process

- Complete the online application
- Schedule an interview
- Complete self-paced training quiz
- Schedule 1:1 training
- Start taking calls, chats, run a Support Group, join IT team

### 2020 Volunteers

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<th>Interviewed Rejected</th>
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<th>SGL</th>
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# 2021 Volunteers

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How old are our volunteers?

Age Range: 20-75
Average Age: 39

How do we identify? (Pronouns)
He/Him: 247
She/Her: 119
They/Them: 8
Where do our volunteers live? (other than US)
- Netherlands
- Germany
- New Zealand
- Australia
- South Africa
- France
- Brazil
- Japan
- Denmark
- Mexico
- Poland
- Belgium
- Portugal
- Russia

What languages do we speak?
- Germany
- Dutch
- ASL
- Hindi
- Urdu
- Greek
- Mandarin
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Italian
- Russia
- Japanese
- Yiddish
**What is our religious background?**

- Islam
- Jewish
- Roman Catholic
- Lutheran
- Christian
- Baha’i
- Wicca
- Buddhist
- Christian Scientist
- Pentecostal
- Evangelical
- Protestant
- Mennonite

**How do we identify now?**

- Agnostic
- Humanist
- Secular Buddhist
- Pastafarian
- Anti-theist
- Freethinker
- Non-religious
- Spiritual
- Skeptic
- Pagan
- Pragmatist
- Satanist
- Critical Thinker
The Interview

Content:

30 Questions

–recently added 2 additional

12 Evaluation questions

Duration:

30 minutes up to 2.5 hours

Meet the Interviewers

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<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>5/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brina</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>2/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>4/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shana</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>1/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>12/20-10/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>5/20-12/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>All of 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goals for 2022

Develop a Plan to Track Volunteers

–Collaborate closely with John and Steve
–Create a check-in system
–Consider an exit form
–Use one database
### 2021 Expense Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>8738.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADMINISTRATIVE</strong></td>
<td>6368.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Software</td>
<td>6368.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>1273.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>707.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Supplies</td>
<td>52.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>336.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROMOTIONAL</strong></td>
<td>1014.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>1014.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional Materials</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEES</strong></td>
<td>6801.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Fees</td>
<td>1791.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Taxes</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Taxes</td>
<td>1026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Taxes</td>
<td>8.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licenses</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAYROLL</strong></td>
<td>11242.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayle</td>
<td>11242.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAMS</strong></td>
<td>14807.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpline</td>
<td>762.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Groups</td>
<td>13275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular Therapy</td>
<td>719.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Excursion</td>
<td>24972.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVENTS</strong></td>
<td>2141.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>218.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1818.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>104.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRAINING AND RETENTION</strong></td>
<td>4520.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Appreciation</td>
<td>1044.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable Contributions</td>
<td>3475.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REFUNDS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation Refunds</td>
<td>10.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>74249.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2020 Revenue Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PayPal One Time Donors</td>
<td>$23,544.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PayPal Subscribers</td>
<td>$10,312.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Check Donors</td>
<td>$9,091.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Company Checks</td>
<td>$6,301.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$11,250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts</td>
<td>$2,054.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>$6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon Smile</td>
<td>$1,080.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PayPal Giving</td>
<td>$289.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (blog)</td>
<td>$17.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbubble (Merchandise)</td>
<td>$46.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YFNA Fundraiser</td>
<td>$7,489.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursion</td>
<td>$17,286.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASH</td>
<td>$4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripe Donations</td>
<td>$216.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$88,991.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PayPal Reporting

Sales  All PayPal sales
$42,143 USD
▲ 171% from a year ago

Number of transactions  All PayPal sales
1,265
▲ 64% from a year ago

Average order value  All PayPal sales
$33 USD
▲ 88% from a year ago
PayPal subscribers provide a steady revenue source. Of our subscribers:

We have a total of 133 Paypal subscribers.
70 PayPal Subscribers are active
12 PayPal Subscribers are paused

The financial health of our organization depends on several factors:

- Efficient spending: We make every expenditure count, take advantage of free or discounted services, and rely heavily on the expertise of our volunteers.
- We value every donor. We encourage manageable donation amounts and provide significant value for those donors in free programs and content.
- We have varied revenue streams. We add new means of income every year.
- Our leadership, specifically Gayle and Darrel, excel at targeted donor outreach and grant earnings.
- Innovative and cooperative fundraising involving our community

### Top customer countries by sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Number of transactions</th>
<th>Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>$39,751 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>$1,101 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$480 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>$388 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$254 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$98 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$40 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$25 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$4 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$2 USD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial Goal Review from 2021

- Continue to nurture existing revenue streams
- Reinvigorate grant research
- Add at least one more revenue stream
- Spotlight Double the Donation in our social media, newsletter, and internal communications
- Identify investment opportunities for foundational savings
- Provide fundraising guidance to Support Groups
- Generate regular monthly social media asks

Review Notes:
- We are still in need of a grant writer.
- Need to follow up on investment planning
- Although social media asks were made, there is room for improvement regarding how often
- We added a yearly YFNA fundraiser as a significant revenue stream
- We’ve completed our Benevity account details, making it easier for donors to find us through that source

Financial Goals for 2022

- Search for a grant writer
- Secure investment growth
- Make regular (at least monthly) asks for donations via social media platforms
- Leverage donations through International Growth
- Take advantage of the YouTube Giving Program (we’ve only just recently been verified for this)
- Research other donations opportunities listed in Guidestar - Add at least one of them
- Encourage birthday giving fundraising via Facebook among leadership and volunteers
- Grow YFNA Fundraiser
- Encourage Ambassadors to solicit donations (pending pandemic activity and status)
2021 Social Media Report

/RecoveringfromReligion @RfRorg

/TheSecularTherapyProject @SecularTherapy

/RfRSupportGroupsProject /RecoveringfromReligion

@RfRorg @recoveringfromreligion
Facebook Page Likes

31.2K

Age & Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facebook Likes Gain

2018 — 883
2019 — 7884
2020 — 2159
2021 — 2835

Facebook Reach Comparison

2020

Facebook Page Reach

1,075,688 ↑ 100%
2021

Facebook Page Reach

793,284 ↓ 25.3%

TOP PERFORMING POST

Happy Sunday, friends.

Reach

357.4K

Facebook post
Lil Nas X took something to
Likes and reactions
4.7K
Facebook post

Post: "For the first Rf...
Reach
8.3K
Ad

Post: "As we go into t...
Likes and reactions
910
Ad
Secular Therapy Project Facebook Demographics

Facebook Page Likes:
5.7K

Age & Gender:

United States: 84.3%
Canada: 2.7%
Australia: 1.4%
Bangladesh: 1.1%
United Kingdom: 1.1%
India: 0.9%
Philippines: 0.9%
South Africa: 0.8%
Pakistan: 0.5%
Mexico: 0.4%
Facebook Likes Comparison

2019 — 937
2020 — 765
2021 — 302

Facebook Reach Comparison
2020

99,984 ↑ 100%
2021

Facebook Page Reach

21,353 ↓ 78.6%

TOP PERFORMING POSTS

You don’t need another headache...

Reach 1
10.2K

Facebook post
Facebook conclusions

- Increase posting frequency
- Use targeted paid ads periodically to boost programs
- Vary posts to include
  - Blog graphics
  - Meetup reminders
  - Memes
  - Videos
  - Program information
- Make use of potentially viral content to boost special announcements and page in general
- Post more videos - algorithms favor these
- Make use of Facebook stories
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Followers Gained</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top Tweets by Impressions

Top Tweet earned 39.7K impressions

Lil Nas X took something that used to hurt him and made it a part of his art, empowerment, and healing journey. We are here for it. ❤️

@LilNasX pic.twitter.com/n4YHhG7LQJ
Top Tweet earned 16.2K impressions

Join us as Seth discusses the tools and tactics used by Christian Nationalists to secure power and influence over their followers.

Monday, July 5th
8PM EST/ 7PM CST/
6PM MST/ 5PM PST

For more info:
recoveringfromreligion.org/rfrx

@SethAndrewsTTA @ThinkingAtheist
pic.twitter.com/ECOeERau35
Secular Therapy Project

Secular Therapy Project connects non-religious or secular persons who need mental health services with outstanding mental health professionals.

Followers
Tweets and Followers gained annually

2019 — 86 Followers Gained / 3 Tweets
2020 — 397 Followers Gained / 118 Tweets
2021 — 192 Followers Gained / 113 Tweets

Top Tweets by Impressions

Top Tweet earned 7,847 impressions

It’s okay if you can’t come out yet. There are still people who will listen. ❤️
[link](twitter.com/RFRorg/status/…)

👍 3  ❤️ 11
**Twitter Conclusions**

- Increase posting frequency
- Continue to make use of tagging and community connections to increase impressions
- Join more community conversations with focus on ally organizations
- Vary posts to include
  - Blog graphics
  - Meetup reminders
  - Memes
  - Videos
  - Program information
- Recruit STP volunteer to post general mental wellness content
RfR Instagram Demographics

Instagram Followers

2K

Age & Gender

Women 63.1%
Men 36.9%
Top Countries

United States
58.7%
Canada
3.8%
Australia
1.8%
United Kingdom
1.8%
South Africa
0.8%

Instagram Reach Comparison
2020

Instagram Reach

135,993 ↑ 100%

Jan 21  Mar 1  Apr 10  May 20  Jun 29  Aug 8  Sep 17  Oct 27  Dec 6
2021

Instagram Reach

20,488 ↓ 84.9%

Jan 21 Mar 2 Apr 11 May 21 Jun 30 Aug 9 Sep 18 Oct 28 Dec 7

Top Performing Posts

"I do not accept that we were created as a slave species for an abusive god who threatens us with eternal torment if we refuse to love him." — Recovering from Religion

March 5, 2021 at 1:46 PM
ID: 17870215796281105

Interactions

❤️ 220 likes  🗤 4 comments

Performance

Reach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Worst</th>
<th>Best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,454</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likes, comments and shares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Worst</th>
<th>Best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instagram conclusions

- Continue current posting schedule and patterns
- Use targeted paid ads periodically to boost programs
- Vary posts to include
  - Blog graphics
  - Meetup reminders
  - Memes
  - Videos
  - Program information
- Use the stories function at least weekly
- Post more videos and clips
RfR Youtube

Your videos got 29,934 views in 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views</th>
<th>Watch time (hours)</th>
<th>Subscribers</th>
<th>Your estimated revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29.9K</td>
<td>7.8K</td>
<td>+1.2K</td>
<td>$137.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEE MORE
RfR Youtube Demographics

Age and gender
Views · 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13–17 years</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–24 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34 years</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–44 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–54 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–64 years</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top Performing Videos

This video has gotten 1,017 views since it was published

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Views</td>
<td>1.0K</td>
<td>321.8</td>
<td>+18</td>
<td>$10.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your video
RfRx - Religious Trauma: The Negati...
RfR TikTok

This video has gotten 635 views since it was published

- Views: 635
- Watch time (hours): 178.1
- Subscribers: +13
- Your estimated revenue: $5.37

This video has gotten 613 views since it was published

- Views: 613
- Watch time (hours): 246.2
- Subscribers: +2
- Your estimated revenue: $5.74

@recoveringfromreligion

12 Following  91 Followers  272 Likes

Have questions about leaving your faith? Doubt your religion? We can help.

https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org
2021 Goal Review

- Continue upward trend in follower, engagement, and reach statistics
- Create more dynamic Twitter presence
- Include more stories from volunteers and clients in content
- Create one viral post per quarter
- Launch TikTok presence

2022 Goals

- Continue upward trend in follower, engagement, and reach statistics
- Create more story posts on Facebook and Instagram
- Create more targeted ads promoting STP
- Create more targeted ads promoting RfR Programs
- Create more targeted ads/posts soliciting donations
- Grow TikTok presence
- Recruit assistance
REVENUE/DONOR MGMT/GRANTS - Gayle Jordan, ED

Factoids:
We use a donor management company: Donor Tools
Largest donation in 2021: $11,000
Smallest: $1 (onetime) $4 (monthly)
295 total 2021 donors of any amount
19 Donors of $1000 in any one donation, but
32 donors of $1000 over lifetime (accumulated)
Adding ACH ability
Annual budget: $60k (increase every year since 2016)
100% Board Members are donors

Donor quote: I discovered RfR one-and-a-half years ago, and shortly thereafter I volunteered as a helpline agent. I haven’t participated in this role nearly as much as I aspired to, but my few interactions as a helpline agent have all been meaningful and uplifting. Moreover, I have been extremely impressed with all that RfR staff and volunteers accomplish, most especially when considering the size of RfR’s budget relative to other nonprofits.

Revenue Streams:
Donors - Paypal
Fundraiser
  Annual podcast (Fall excursion)
  FB (birthdays, etc)
Red bubble (link) https://www.redbubble.com/people/RfR-org/shop
Foundations - usually trusts
Double the Donation (matching funds)
Amazon Smile
Medium - blog!
Youtube (mostly RfRx)
Estate planning
Grants (need researcher/writer)
Matching gift opportunity
Tabling

Promotions:
Podcast fundraiser
Giving Tuesday
End-of-year plea (email) to donors
Who Are We Anyway?

David Klinge
- Provides general support for existing systems/services
- Serves as website admin and developer for the Secular Therapy Project exclusively

Phil Session
- Provides general support for existing systems/services
- Focuses on providing support for current website (SquareSpace), Yodel, Zoom, etc.

Though total unique viewers had a slight downtick last year, raw page views (which would include repeat page visits) was 207,000 for the 2021 year, a 3% increase over the prior year.

In a similar way as last year, direct navigation to the RfR website continues to be the majority of our traffic. In fact, this percentage has increased since last year, meaning that our name recognition and retention is moving in a positive direction.

Social media traffic referrals had the largest growth of any category: 111%.

Direct traffic, still being the highest source, still saw a notable movement of just under 25%.
Unique Web Traffic by Year (Cumulative)

- 2017: 47744
- 2018: 49212
- 2019: 68529
- 2020: 98801
- 2021: 82560
RfR 3.0 - Gwen Blodgett, Project Director

The 3.0 Project Team had four primary goals for 2021, and was able to successfully address each area. In addition, team members branched off from the 3.0 Project to support the STP website.

The primary success for 2021 is the roll-out of the threaded chat tool for agents working the helpline. The response from agents has been overwhelmingly positive. Additional enhancements are planned for 2022.

The website refresh is live. New information yielded the ability to stay with the SquareSpace platform.

A key accomplishment this year was moving all of the development activity onto GitHub providing a consistent single location for the team.

The Volunteer Management Solution design is complete and development has started.

Goals for 2022

- Moving from being a project-focused team to a project-support team.
- Implementing an MVP for Volunteer Management.
- Providing automated reporting on chat activity.
RfR International

When Dr Ray first asked me to join the Board I was beyond excited – in fact, if I recall correctly, I barely let him finish the sentence before I said, @#%* YEAH!! So that was already unexpected.

What was even more unexpected was the Board’s assignment for me – international expansion! For a girl raised in a misogynistic, patriarchal cult, otherwise known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who is still exploring blazing her own trail forward – I will be forever grateful to RfR for giving me the space to do just that.

International development – where to even start?? Well RfR is, in essence, already international; with volunteers, clients and support groups in almost every time zone as well as STP registered therapists. Setting that recognition to one side, how can we develop RfR further in other countries, in addition to support groups, helpline agents and STP-registered therapists?

Let’s take Australia as an example. As Australia grew the Board discussed the implications of international growth so on 3rd November 2021 the Aussie Leadership Group met with members of the Board to discuss international development and identify what lessons had been learned in Australia.

Mission Driven - First & Foremost

To mitigate against mission drift, it is crucial that any country/language/region group understands and adheres first and foremost to RfR’s Mission: “….to provide hope, healing and support for those struggling with issues related to doubt and non-belief…..”

Know & Understand

To launch RfR in another country/language/region, a thorough and solid understanding of the commonalities and differences of the area is essential. A “minimum viable product” threshold must be achieved for basic needs to be set up.
Lessons Learned from Australia

1st Level
– Support Group Meetings lead the way!
– Local leadership of RfR volunteers that meet regularly (minuted)
– Leadership representative to report back to RfR Board
– STP should also be driven in that area
– Local relationships with organizations, coordinated with RfR Board
– Local team to conduct RfR volunteer interviews with new applicants in the country/region
– Local team trained and have enough experience to provide training to new volunteers

2nd LEVEL
– All of 1st Level
– Plus transition to local language

3rd LEVEL
– All of the above
– Plus charity status

Following the 3rd November meeting, a help-wanted advertisement was placed in Slack communities and from that two volunteers came forward to form the International Development Team.

The team met together for the first time on 5th December 2021 to discuss the project and how best to proceed. From that meeting, a Terms of Reference was drafted:

This Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines the object and purpose of the RfR working Group

The ToR may be amended from time to time as the working group sees fit

Purpose: The purpose of the RfR International working group is to facilitate the international expansion of RfR in line with the direction of the parent organization.
Objectives:
Develop a systematic approach to establishing local, culturally appropriate support groups
Support the development and training of local leadership
Oversee the process for local recognition, including but not limited to, incorporation/formalization/registration as appropriate to best achieve the objectives of RfR
Provide resources/templates for local leadership development
Grow and empower local leadership

Membership: Current membership is approved by the RfR Parent board and currently consists of the following:
Sherrie D'Souza
Shana Rubio
Christopher Karvountzis

Meeting Frequency/Mode: Meetings will be held monthly on the first Sunday unless otherwise agreed by the membership (next meeting: Sat 5th/Sun 6th February)
Decision-making: simple consensus and discussion will be implemented, with recommendations/determinations requiring policy changes or funding allocation to be submitted to the RfR board for approval.

There are many, many questions that are yet to be answered such as:

Leadership
• What do we even call them? Affiliates, councils, branches
• What do “affiliates” look like? country vs region vs language?
• How to oversee and guard against mission drift?
• Mentoring from International Development Team, including guidance on admin processes required
Programs

- Support Groups!
- Helpline?? Central line? But expand to non-English speaking agents?
- Fall Excursions – YES! Eventually…..
- RfR Ambassadors – most in leadership group should be approved RfR Ambassadors
- Programs largely not affected: Podcast, Blog, Online Community, Online Programming, Resources, Library

Social Media & Marketing

- how best to manage this across different countries and languages?

STP

- Country-based databases?? (registration & certification differences)
- Donations and Funding
- Requirements likely to differ per country – differences in Australia to American 501(c)3

IT

- What IT considerations need to be made for expansion, can it scale as RfR grows?
- Can Slack handle the growth?

Governance

- Policies & Procedures – tweaking for each area, esp with non-English countries
- Liability risks – dependent on individual country requirements & obligations
- Governance Framework & reporting lines back to RfR

Still, while we have many questions, we’ve made tremendous progress throughout 2021. We now have a framework and resources in place to start tackling these questions and with two Board members the communication back to the RfR Board will be strong. We are beyond excited at what 2022 holds and can’t wait to see what we accomplish in helping people across language and country barriers recover from religion.
Recovering from Religion (RfR) Australia

2021 ANNUAL REPORT
1. Introduction

RfR Australia launched in January 2021 with the Leadership Team comprising 7 members. The leadership group meet fortnightly via Zoom to work on growing recognition of the RfR brand here in Australia. A Sydney support group had already commenced in April 2020 however, due to ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns, this first group has not yet had the opportunity to meet face-to-face. At that point in time, there were only a smattering of Australian RfR volunteers in various roles, mostly as Helpline Agents.

As the Leadership Team continued to meet, roles evolved and were defined, and smaller groups created to focus on various aspects of growing RfR. Despite COVID-19, the team focused on making the Sydney online support group as successful as possible, with 3 team members completing Support Group Leader training, providing a larger pool of support for the bi-monthly schedule.

Despite the pandemic, during 2021, the group were able to take advantage of several media opportunities that resulted in multiple high profile Australian newspaper and magazine articles. Identifying and reaching out to other Australian secular organizations also assisted in raising the profile and visibility of RfR activities. This too, led to an invitation to speak at Skepticon 2021 Australia & New Zealand in November 2021.

Further exciting progress has been the development of our relationship with University of Technology Sydney [UTS], resulting in October 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] being drafted, proposing varying collaborative research activities under the umbrella focus topic of “Coercive Control in High Control Communities”. It is expected that the MOU will be executed in the first quarter of 2022.

As at the end of 2021, we are excited to report that the Leadership Team expanded to nine persons. Our two new members have ex religious backgrounds and bring unique skill sets that enhance the expertise depth of the team.

With so much achieved during 2021, the Leadership Team is excited and geared up for further success in 2022!
# 2. RfR Australia Leadership Group Membership

## Sherrie D’Souza

**Background:** Jehovah’s Witness  
**Role/Area:** Board Member, Ambassador, Chair - RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
I love helping other people and to be able to do so using my life experience as a JW for 40 odd years helps me to make sense of where I am now in life.

## Kathryn Lynch

**Background:** Jehovah’s Witness  
**Role/Area:** Secretary & Research Coordinator, RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
After leaving the JW faith in 2017 and finding that most of my social and family structures no longer existed and being subjected to ongoing shunning, I was very excited to be introduced by Sherrie & Sacha D’Souza to RfR. The values and goals of the organization align with mine, and the activities of RfR provide much needed support for those going through a crisis of faith. Volunteering has helped me with my journey of healing, and it is a privilege to be able to be part of a wonderful team who facilitate support for those embarking on their journeys.

## Sacha D’Souza

**Background:** Jehovah’s Witness  
**Role/Area:** Support Group Director (Oceania) RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
I feel privileged to provide support, validation and a safe space through the Recovering from Religion community, for those taking the brave steps to navigate their way out of a narrow religious world and help them reclaim their authentic lives.

## Daniel Klein

**Background:** Judaism  
**Role/Area:** Ambassador, Helpline Coordinator, RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
I spent most of my childhood and adult life trying to avoid religion for the harm it was doing me. It was only in early 2020 that I realized the issue was much
bigger than just myself and I was strongly motivated to volunteer with RfR. It's incredibly fulfilling to see the difference half an hour can make to so many people in need who contact RfR seeking help.

**Naomi Mourra**

**Background:** Jehovah’s Witness  
**Role/Area:** Social Media / Marketing Director, RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
When I was recovering from religion over 20 years ago, I was lucky enough to have family who had already been through the leaving process and could support me. For me, being part of RfR means being someone’s surrogate family as they navigate through one of life’s most challenging transitions.

**Shawn Powrie**

**Background:** Mormon  
**Area:** Volunteer & Research Coordinator, RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**

**Jonathan Durnford**

**Background:** Jehovah’s Witness  
**Area:** Ambassador, Volunteer Coordinator, RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
I’ve been out of religion for 10 years, but I want to make others for whom the pain is fresher to feel more connected with each other and the resources they need to heal.

**Sallyann Richards**

**Background:** Pentecostal Christian, Therapist  
**Role/Area:** STP Growth Team Member, RfR Leadership Group AU  
**Goal / Personal Motivation:**  
When I started having doubts about my faith and whether any of it was true, I naively thought I would have the love and support of those close to me. Sadly, that wasn’t the case, instead I found myself going through my deconstruction alone. I don’t want anyone else to feel alone and isolated and this is why I’m part of RfR – to walk alongside others with empathy and understanding.
Christopher Karvountzis

**Background:** Jehovah’s Witness

**Role/Area:** International Coordinator, RfR Leadership Group AU

**Goal / Personal Motivation:**
Out of a high control group for over 10 years and I don’t want others to have to experience the trauma of leaving alone. Having experienced depression and contemplated multiple suicide attempts I now know there are a multitude of better options. Having a safe place to turn is absolutely vital. RfR fills that need as the safe touchpoint.

---

**3. Message from the Chair, RfR Australia**

On Wednesday the 30th of November 2016, I sat in a Melbourne airport terminal and heard the announcement that my flight back to Sydney would be delayed by an hour. It was 9.00am and I knew what work was on my desk waiting for me on my return to the office. I messaged my husband, Sacha, to let him know that the flight was delayed. He replied: “you could pass the time by reading the ARC report.” To which I replied: “no thanks. That will just piss me off.”

Except the thought lingered. The ARC report that Sacha mentioned was the Findings Report for Case Study 29 of the Australian Royal Commission [ARC] into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse. The Case Study 29 report was publishing the findings into the ARC’s investigation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. I, like Sacha, had been raised a Jehovah’s Witness and I had devoted most of my 41 years to the religion, adhering rigidly to all of its many restrictions. I knew that the fact the ARC had investigated the Jehovah’s Witnesses meant something wasn’t right, but I didn’t know what the story was, and the Jehovah’s Witness organization itself was certainly not going to tell me!

So, as I sat there in the crowded Melbourne Airport terminal, waiting for my flight home, I thought about the ARC report. Why not read it? It was technically not apostate because it was a government report. So, I started to google for the report and within minutes I had found it and started to read……

Fast forward to now, January 2022. Reading that ARC report commenced my deconversion process, not just from the Jehovah’s Witnesses as it turned out, but from any religious belief whatsoever. I was fortunate that I had the support of my husband throughout my deconversion, but it was still an intensely lonely, harrowing, and traumatic process. This is especially true, when the religion you leave does not give you any graceful or dignified path to leave. They control the narrative about you, and they vilify you – which encourages the terrible mandated shunning you experience from everyone that you ever knew, loved, or thought were your family and friends.

Fortunately, I heard about Recovering from Religion in 2019. By this time, Sacha and I were volunteering our time to help ex-Jehovah’s Witnesses find support, but I was looking for a way to do this more broadly and was pondering setting up an Australian organization focused on supporting people leaving high control groups. I spoke with my good friend, Shana Rubio, also a fellow ex-JW in Colorado USA, about this and she just happened to be on the Board of Recovering from Religion. Shana told me all about RfR and arranged for me to have a chat with Dr Darrel Ray.
A few months following that discussion with Dr Ray, I joined RfR and went through my Support Group Leader training with the intention of starting a group in Sydney, Australia. Naomi Mourra, who had recently returned to Australia, also became an RfR Support Group Leader, and co-hosted with me the very first Australia RfR Support Group in April 2020 on Zoom. From that very first support group meeting, I was hooked. RfR was meeting a need for me, that sits at the very core of my being, although I had no idea where it would lead me and the amazing people it would bring me into contact with. Sacha joined me as a Support Group Leader in September 2020 and began to work closely with Eric Wells, the RfR Support Group Director.

In January 2021, the RfR AU Leadership Group was formed. Throughout 2021 our team met fortnightly to discuss how we would grow RfR in Australia, no mean feat! The following report will show a body of work I am so very proud of despite the challenges of another year grappling with a global pandemic, along with our goals for 2022. Enjoy the read about your fellow volunteers who live in the future!
3 2021 Summary by Activity

3.1 Recruitment – Volunteers

We are proud of the expanding team of Australian-based RfR volunteers. The Australian volunteers work with the main 6 organizations through standard channels but are also offered some casual support from the Australian leadership team.

In 2021 the overall number of volunteers grew from 7 to 15.

One of our goals for 2022 is to continue growing our volunteer team and to provide local support to those joining the broader RfR volunteer team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Leadership Team</th>
<th>RfR Ambassador</th>
<th>Support Group Leader</th>
<th>Helpline Agent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sherrie D’Souza</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Sacha D’Souza</td>
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<td>Naomi Mourra</td>
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<td>Kathy Lynch</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
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<td>Jonathan Durnford</td>
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<td>Daniel Klein</td>
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<td>Shawn Powrie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christopher Karvountzis</td>
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<td>Sallyann Richards</td>
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<td>Perth/F2F</td>
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<td>Paige Lundie</td>
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<td>Alison Brennan</td>
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<td>Brent Ladbrook</td>
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<td>Nathan Pokoney (Gates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ildiko Haag</td>
<td>Southern Highlands, NSW</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Training</td>
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</table>
3.2 Support Groups

In 2021 our ongoing Zoom-based support groups have been at the heart of our community building, and efforts to offer hope, healing, and support to those struggling with issues arising from doubt or disbelief. We have seen rocketing growth of our meetup group from 163 members to 342!

Our twice-monthly Zoom support groups have consistently attracted relatively large audiences (sometimes reaching 20-30 attendees) with high levels of engagement, support, and connection. While there have been occasional challenges with some attendees, for the most part the support meetings have been highly positive for all attending and we’ve received consistent positive feedback. Many meetings include open sharing and deeply heartfelt support and connection between attendees and support group coordinators.

Our audiences were originally more Australian, however, over time they have expanded to a more international attendee base. Due to the Australian time zones being more favorable, our support groups have attracted attendees from Southeast Asia and often Europe and America. We are considering rebranding the online zoom group from Sydney, to more broadly, Australia.

Attendees were initially predominantly ex-Jehovah’s Witnesses, but pleasingly we have seen many others now regularly attend from varying religious varieties including Pentecostal, fundamentalist evangelical Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Falun Gong, Mormon, Gnosis (a new age sex cult), Catholic, Evangelical Anglican and we’ve even had a Vegan come along describing high control behaviors in some of those groups.

In 2022, we are aiming to move the Sydney based group to face-to-face format, while also introducing face-to-face support groups in Perth and Adelaide. We also aim to rebrand our current zoom online group to an “Australian” group (i.e., not city/state specific). This will cater to all other attendees, including our international members, who are always welcome. COVID-19 restrictions allow us to host events, such as BBQs, to allow attendees social time, face to face, to get to know one another and share their stories.

Below is some positive unsolicited feedback from some of our attendees:

“I attended my first online RfR meeting when my marriage of 18 years had just ended because my husband had joined a sex cult that I did not want to join. RfR provided a safe, private, and compassionate place for me to speak about a very isolating and difficult experience. I found it incredibly helpful to hear others tell their stories as well – I felt less alone….” Emily

“When I was kicked out of the Jehovah’s Witness religion over 40 years ago, I was left with a huge void in my life. I lost all my friends and my family because of the shunning policy of the religion. There was no internet, no support group, no family help, no nothing. This is where RfR is of great benefit. It provides an immediate and safe coping mechanism to deal with the issues of leaving religion.” Mark

“Right when I felt all alone with a belief system that was failing me, when I was struggling to find my footing on a slippery slope, RfR was there to lend a hand. When I felt I was suffocating in the fumes of toxic ways, my RfR Support Group was my oxygen! The group met me with compassion and understanding right where I was at and without judgment. We share, laugh, cry, and grow together. We see, and are seen by, each other. When everything seemed to be spinning too fast, my group gently helped me regain my footing and get my bearings. I am deeply grateful to everyone who makes this valuable support possible.” Sarah
3.3 The Secular Therapy Project (STP)

2021 saw a kick-off of several activities and conversations in Australia related to progressing the STP.

Firstly, our leadership team has had extensive conversations over time to explore the unique value of the STP in Australia. To introduce the topic - in Australia, psychotherapy appears to be more highly regulated than in the United States, with more regulatory and governing bodies and colleges in place. The result of this is that secular, evidence-based therapy is the general norm, making it more available to those seeking help. A typical individual seeking out psychotherapy in Australia is quite likely to encounter predominantly or exclusively secular and evidence-based methodologies. That’s not to say that therapists don’t exist who will employ religious methods, nor to say that no Australian therapists’ work is coloured or influenced by religion, but that the general standards of therapy are more regulated.

As a result of this, the team has determined that a possible primary benefit of the STP in Australia would be to identify and recruit therapists who specialize in religious trauma as opposed to merely targeting those who utilize a purely secular approach. This is the focus we presently have in mind for the STP in Australia (however we are open to further feedback).

On the logistical front, we have identified a major issue with how the post codes are searchable on the RfR website which basically means Australian searchers are unable to utilize the directory. This technological issue makes us hesitant to push the STP recruitment drive further in Australia, due to this identified issue. Gwen Blodgett is aware of this and has assigned resources to work on this troublesome problem.

In anticipation of the resolution of this issue, we have collated lists of therapists that we can reach out to with a “recruitment drive” to see if any positive connections can be made with individuals who specialize in religious trauma. Aside from these efforts, we are happy to report that 3 therapists have already been onboarded in Australia in 2021.

In 2022, our STP team aims to establish regular communications with the US based STP leadership team so that we can strengthen relationships and work collaboratively through any logistical issues that will doubtless arise.

There is an enormous body of work to be done with the Secular Therapy Project in Australia with significant and varied opportunities to promote religious trauma experts. The need to provide professional religious trauma mental health services to the Australian community is tremendous, and we very much look forward to seeing this particular aspect of RfR AU grow in 2022.
3.4 Collaborations

Throughout 2021 collaborations were initiated and developed with various Australian entities. There are quite a number of secular organizations in Australia that have largely been working independently and only recently are working on combining efforts.

The organizations with which we have been networking are:

1. Sydney Atheists
2. Perth Atheists
3. Humanists Australia
4. Rationalist Society of Australia
5. Atheist Foundation of Australia
6. Humanists Victoria
7. Australian Skeptics
8. Humanists NSW
9. National Secular Lobby

In August 2021, the Census “No Religion” campaign united several secular non-theistic organizations to promote ticking “no religion” in the National Census. Results of the census are eagerly anticipated in June 2022, and excitingly early reports indicate that a massive 45% of Australian citizens ticked “no religion”. While RfR AU was not directly involved in the campaign, we were invited to several of the planning meetings which allowed the opportunity to raise the visibility of RfR to other Australia secular organizations.

In 2022 these relationships will be further developed and strengthened. Various opportunities will doubtless arise from such networking such as the #DontDivideUs campaign, a coalition of 11 freethought organisations, providing feedback on the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and related bills. In January 2022, RfR AU worked on providing its own submission (Appendix 1) to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights on the proposed Religious Discrimination Bill, which, were it to pass, would cause significant divisions and would empower religious organisations to discriminate based along religious lines. A national ad campaign promoting the #DontDivideUs movement is currently being planned and it is possible that RfR AU may be included in that campaign.

University of Technology Sydney [UTS]

Since March 2020, Sherrie has been working along with Professor Alan Davison, Dean of FASS UTS (Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at University of Technology Sydney) for the purpose of raising social awareness of religious harm and to facilitate constructive conversations around what can be done to support those leaving damaging high-control groups.

By the end of 2021, this work is about to result in an MOU being executed with the aim of conducting the following activities:

- Exploratory research activities
- Research projects
- Literature reviews
- Pilot studies
- Creation of and/or participation in joint public events
- Cross promotion of agreed activities and events by FASS and RfR

Through this MOU and collaboration with UTS, RfR AU will be able to share in hosting events to raise public awareness and the profile of RfR AU.
These collaborations are adding to the credibility of RfR AU and will continue to enable the growth and public awareness of the services we provide.

### 3.5 RfR Ambassadors

The Leadership Group actively sought opportunities to speak about RfR during 2021.

In March 2021, RfR AU distributed a Media Release (Appendix 2) across all news desks in Australia to promote RfR. This resulted in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC] promoting RfR AU in two online articles.

- [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-04/these-women-left-their-strict-religion-this-is-what-they-found/100165266](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-04/these-women-left-their-strict-religion-this-is-what-they-found/100165266)

Also in March, Sherrie spoke about her story and RfR on the Curveball Podcast in the “Grew Up in A Cult and Escaped” Part 1 & 2.


In September 2021, an independent human-rights journalist, Amy Fallon, wrote articles mentioning RfR AU in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.


In November 2021, Sherrie presented a talk at the Australian & New Zealand online Skepticon Conference (Appendix 3) which provided a fantastic opportunity to talk about RfR and the services we provide to our clients.

Amy Fallon has become an advocate for religious trauma survivors and continues to seek other platforms and media to bring these stories to a larger audience. In December 2021, the January 2022 Edition of the magazine Marie Claire was released that featured a story (on the front cover no less!) about women leaving religion and was titled “Recovering from Religion”. (Appendix 4)

Amy continues to seek further opportunities and is currently working on a story for VICE.

In 2022, we expect such media opportunities to continue and indeed, in early January 2022, Sherrie & Sacha have both spoken with an SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) producer for the “Insight” program about appearing on a future episode. We very much look forward to what 2022 brings!
4 2021 Overall Summary

4.1 Achievements

- Establishment of strong, regular support groups
- Development of the administrative and strategic framework of the Leadership Group (agenda, minute-taking, goals etc.)
- Establishment and development of networks and relationships with Australian secular and similarly aligned organizations
- Creation and identification of media opportunities leading to increased visibility of the activities of RfR Australia

4.2 Goals for 2022

The 2022 goals for RfR AU, are to continue our upward growth trajectory for the AU support groups and to seek and train more volunteers for support groups and the helpline. Depending on Government COVID-19 laws that stipulate the rules around gatherings, a further goal is to establish both Perth and Sydney face-to-face monthly support meetings.

Additionally, we will continue to seek relevant media recognition and presence, to put front and center the activities of RfR. In the first half of 2022 we are aware of varying media groups putting a spotlight on young persons and the impacts of high control religions, and we will seek to tap into the momentum of this important subject becoming visible in the mainstream media.

RfR AU will also commence the process of seeking not for profit status in Australia. This is a lengthy process that will likely take some time; however, the tangible benefits will be worth the effort.

4.3 Conclusion

As I look back on 2021, I am astonished at how much the team has accomplished, and I feel such a deep and profound gratitude, awe, and respect for my colleagues. I would not be living my dream of helping people who are having their very foundation rocked and torn asunder by doubt, without them. They reflect my passions, my desire to help people and provide safe spaces for people to explore their doubts, fears, and traumas, without judgment. With our combined incredible skill sets and talents, I am tremendously excited about 2022 and what we will accomplish.

It has also been 12 months since I was invited to be a member of the RfR Board. I cannot describe how much I enjoy volunteering in this capacity. Being given the opportunity to help people, not just in my home country of Australia, but across the world, still boggles my mind and I feel such enormous privilege in creating spaces where people can come and be, be themselves authentically and connect to other humans experiencing life similarly.

Bring on 2022!!
Appendix 1:
RfR AU – Submission against the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Religiousdiscrimination/
ons
SUBMISSION 111

Appendix 2:
RfR AU Press Release March 2021

Appendix 3:
Skepticon Australia & New Zealand Conference – November 22nd & 23rd 2021
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1F4r6LH2-Y
** not for public distribution

Appendix 4:
Marie Claire – January 2022
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<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>RfR Book Project – Collaborative Non-fiction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Working Title</td>
<td><em>Recovering from Religion: THESE ARE THEIR STORIES</em></td>
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| Team Members | Alison Brennan - Project Owner / Lead Writer  
Rachel Hunt - Secretary / Meeting Facilitator / Source  
Liaison Max Lavoie - Project Manager / Researcher / IT  
Derrick Khoen - Source Coordinator / Researcher / IT  
Dr Darrel Ray - Contributor Outreach / Publishing Consultant / Foreword  
Glen Nicholson - Legal Advisor / Source Liaison |
| Tasks Completed | Board approval  
Project Management ‘Trello’ set up  
Grooming Meeting  
Google Docs shared drive setup  
Outreach – source material  
Invitations / queries sent – 29  
Enquiries / offers received – 2  
Invitations accepted – 15  
Invitations declined (including no response) – 13  
Invitation accepted (later revoked) – 3  
Standard CAVEAT created for all outgoing intellectual property  
Completed Chapter 1 – *Life as an Evangelical*  
Completed Chapter 2 – *Confronting Catholicism*  
Source Material received – United Pentecostal Church  
Contributor confirmed – Buddhism  
Source Material received – Mormonism  
Contract signed for Chapter 2 |
| Tasks Pending | Chapter 3 in progress – *Post Traumatic Pentecostal*  
Chapter 4 in progress – *Buddhism: Dawn of Critical Thinking*  
Chapter 5 – Mormonism (pending review of |
| Pending further information | Invitation accepted – Jeff Peters (Presbyterian)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Sherrie D'Souza (JW)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Jay Bettale (International Church of Christ)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Monirul (Islam)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Eleisha Moreno (Branhamism)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Lynn Short (Gnosis of Samael Aun Weor)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Michael Paddock (JW)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – John Szoges (The Stone Church)  
|                           | Invitation accepted – Dana Hampson (Church of Christ)  
| Expenses | **Legal** – US$180 US Legal Forms 12-month subscription  
|           | [www.uslegalforms.com](http://www.uslegalforms.com) borne by *Left Write Left* (donated to RfR). |
Summary

The project is progressing slowly, though in line with (or perhaps even ahead of) the schedule.

Two story chapters are ready for final proofing, having been agreed upon with the contributors:

Chapter 1 is pre-emptively titled *Life as an Evangelical*, based on source material from Impish Misconception (pseudonym), a client and active member of the OC. They do not wish to communicate in any way other than via messaging and wish to be named under the provided pseudonym only. This chapter was ghost-written and agreed upon by the contributor. It is based on trans-denominational protestant Christianity.

Chapter 2 is pre-emptively titled *Confronting Catholicism*, based on source material from Cathy Hernandez – a former client and now active Helpline Agent. Communication has been via Slack, email and zoom. This chapter was ghost-written and agreed upon by the contributor. It is based on Catholicism. A contract has been reviewed and signed.

A further 3 chapters are pending:

Chapter 3 is pre-emptively titled *Post Traumatic Pentecostal*, based on source material from Debbie McNulty – a blogger and activist against child sexual abuse related to the United Pentecostal Church in Wisconsin. The story is based upon her publicized blog, which is extensive (over 300 pages). The chapter is ghost-written, distilled directly from the content of the blog with the contributor's permission, which she states is an accurate representation of her story. However, some names will be changed for legal reasons, with which she agrees. Vetting online (open source) has not found any discrediting material. The chapter is well under way (after cutting 315 pages down to 25) and should be completed by the end of January.

Chapter 4 is being written by the contributor – Dawn Boiani-Sandberg, who is a RfR volunteer and vlogger, remains a non-theistic Tibetan Buddhist and has an interesting story of her profound experiences in Nepal versus her tenure with a co-opted Buddhist group in the US, which used the dogma to control their members through a fear of hell. She also volunteered to write the synopsis component of the chapter on Buddhism, having studied the religion formally. She is confident that she can summarize Buddhism broadly, comparing the various teachings, with a focus on Tibetan Buddhism. The writing of this chapter is underway, and
we will touch base with Dawn again at the end of January to assess its progress.

Chapter 5 is yet to be commenced, though is earmarked based on Mormonism. We have two potential contributors who have provided source material thus far – Nathan Sunderland, author of *Becoming a None*, who has provided a copy of his book for a chapter to be distilled by a ghost-writer; and Erik Huckvale, Helpline Director, who has provided a written outline titled *Blessings and Bloodshed: Another Story of Faith in Crisis* from which a chapter can be edited for publishing (pending consultation). The source material has not yet been vetted. However, given the intention of the book and the hard work of volunteers, Erik at this stage would be preferred as the contributor for the Mormonism chapter.
Potential Contributors
A further 9 contributors have agreed to provide outlines but have been given an extended timeline in lieu of the current source material already in the vetting process. Of note, there are two potential contributors for the Jehovah's Witness chapter – at this stage, provided she remains interested, RfR Board Member Sherrie D'Souza remains the preferred contributor for this chapter.

The potential contributor for the Muslim chapter is more interested in writing political / human rights articles. His story would be more focused on being an atheist in a Muslim country. As such, we are actively seeking further contributors from a Muslim background (with care) – there are a couple of blog articles referred by Kristina Cassidy that may lead to potential contributors, which need to be reviewed and contact made with the authors.

Contracts
Contract templates have been sourced based on US legislation, specific to Kansas State Law, and tailored to this project i.e. Editor and Contributor referenced instead of Publisher and Author. These contracts are designed as an interim measure (until we can secure a Publisher) to accomplish three main goals – give RfR permission for publishing rights specifically in relation to the ghost-written version of each story (which does not prevent the contributor from writing their own work at any stage based on their source material); protect RfR in terms of legal liability; and delineate ownership of the specific written version, which is the intellectual property of RfR (the source material remains the property of the contributor, whilst the ghost-written piece is the IP of RfR regardless of whether it is published). The signed contract agreed to with Cathy Hernandez is attached for review.

All of the current tasks are listed on the Project Management dashboard via Trello and source documents uploaded for transparency. Regular updates and team communications are facilitated primarily via the Book Project channel in Slack.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Outreach and Credibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outreach to subject matter experts is unlikely to be successful unless from an official representative of RfR to verify that the project is pursued on behalf of the organization and that it is viable.</td>
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<th>Different Doctrines</th>
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<td>‘Synopsis’ / ‘Overview’ chapters on different doctrines will need to be clearly defined – trans-denominational terms and concepts such as Evangelicalism and Born Again may have cross-over to different doctrines. For example, it is suggested that a broadly defined chapter on Evangelical Protestant Christianity would be appropriate. Other chapters will unavoidably have references to evangelicalism, but this will be a concept underlying the doctrine it explores. Similarly, the idea of a ‘Born Again’ chapter is being entertained – the potential contributor’s background is a rather specific brand of Pentecostal church, but it would be interesting to focus a chapter specifically upon the idea of what it means to be ‘born again’ based on this source material.</td>
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<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Contributor Outreach – Subject Matter Experts</th>
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<td>Continued success will be contingent upon the involvement of subject matter experts for the various doctrines – to write the synopsis component for each</td>
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chapter (3000-5000 words). These subject matter experts need not have educational qualifications, provided they are recognised to be of some prominence and/or authority regarding the overall doctrine and are willing to be credited within the book as the contributor. If necessary, the chapter can be ghost-written, edited, or distilled on behalf of the subject matter expert and reviewed by them for veracity – we do not want the prospect of this as a burdensome task to dissuade potential contributors. For the same reason, approaching published authors would be of benefit, as they would be able to submit an aggregate or extension of their existing works without having to commit excessive amounts of time (e.g. Seth Andrews and Lloyd Evans).

It is not an aim for all synopsis chapters to be written by ‘name’ authors or prominent atheists. However, a couple would help with the marketability of the book and would assist in getting others on board. It is not even required that the subject matter expert be an atheist, provided they can adequately explain/summarize the doctrine.

**Publishing – Advice and Guidance**

Given the collaborative nature of this work, structured advice is required regarding legal implications and logistics moving forward. It is particularly difficult to discern the potential legal hurdles across state and international borders, with contributors from different parts of the world. In addition, given the combination of original and edited works, intellectual property and copyright laws need to be clarified.

Advice was sought from John Loftus, who referred the team to associate Ed Babinski. He was able to provide only the name of the publisher for a multi-contributor book he edited in 1994, being *Prometheus Books*.

Activist, Vi La Bianca, has a journalism degree and is a self-proclaimed Publisher (or works for a Publishing House) in Texas. They have participated in RfR fundraiser broadcasts previously. It may be prudent to liaise with Vi for direction in relation to Publishing a work of this nature – they may even wish to be involved in the project, which we would welcome. However, any involvement by Vi would need to be clearly delineated from *Skeptic Generation* as well as their co-host and partner, Eric. Contact has not and will not be made with Vi prior to approval by the RfR Board.
| Actions | 1. Continue with tasks as above and scheduled via Trello  
2. Board approval – contact Vi La Bianca regarding publishing advice  
3. Board assistance – contact with Vi La Bianca on behalf of RfR for assistance (if approved)  
4. Board assistance – contact with Seth Andrews regarding potential chapter on Evangelicalism (Christianity)  
5. Board assistance – contact with Lloyd Evans regarding potential chapter on the Jehovah’s Witness doctrine |
The Board of Directors of Recovering from Religion remains one of the strongest in the secular movement. With 7 long-standing Directors, each Board member also serves in a working capacity within the organization. Additionally, our Board is composed of 100% financial contributors. In addition to time and money, our outstanding Board is completely vested in the mission, and contributes creativity, passion, and a vision for the future. Lastly, Recovering from Religion is in the enviable position of having the founder, Dr. Darrel Ray, serve as its Board President.
SUMMARY

Recovering from Religion continues to be the premier resource for those in our society who seek out support as they journey through doubting and leaving their faith. The Board and Staff relentlessly seek to find means to provide this vital and necessary service.

2021 was a year that saw substantial growth and development in all of the programs highlighted above, in spite of the incredibly trying, continuing international pandemic in which we find ourselves.

We aim to be on the cutting edge of the advantages of technology that will widen and deepen our ability to reach more in need.

Additionally, we have further streamlined and refined our budget to be optimally efficient. Our donor cultivation and retention remains one of our highest priorities, with consistent communication and information being the primary tools with which we accomplish this goal.

Our leadership philosophy is founded on a clear mission statement, and laser focus on every program we develop being in complete alignment. We constantly seek to establish and strengthen our partnerships with the wider secular community, enhancing our ability to assist our clients as they journey toward a fulfilling and productive life post-religion.

We believe our volunteers are our single greatest asset, and we provide comprehensive and up-to-date training and mentorship, along with straightforward and reasonable policies and procedures. We have had the absolute pleasure of seeing some of our Helpline clients progress to becoming volunteers, paying forward the chain of support.

We were awarded the 2021 Platinum rating from Guidestar, the charity-rating service. This is the highest award possible, and reflects our commitment to transparency and accountability.

Lastly, we have the privilege and responsibility of being one of the 19 supporting organizations of the Secular Coalition of America, as they put forth effort to keep church and state separate, ensuring religious liberty for all.

We look to the future and see 2022 as a continuing opportunity for reaching those who need hope, healing, and support as they examine their beliefs, and seek to live a life of reason and rationality.