

together

INTERCONGREGATIONAL | INTERCULTURAL | INTERGENERATIONAL



TOGETHER

AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

While the women of *Together* will have a brief respite from their spring semester, they will soon be gearing up for the May Term at CTU (April 19 – May 21). The second semester of online courses has been both challenging and life giving. Each of us has been amazed at how our relationships have developed by connecting with one another virtually! **Sister Haerok Na, SC**, gives evidence of that in her column.

Jane Aseltyne, IHM, Nicole Varnerin, SND, and I will be saying our farewells to Haerok in just a few short weeks. Each of us will miss Haerok's kindness, her beautiful smile, and her delightful giggle. Had it not been for the *Together* Program, none of us would have had the opportunity to get to know this lovely woman from South Korea.

Together is an intentional community for newer members of religious communities who are engaged in full-time study at CTU, and who continue to participate in ongoing formation. While the original format of *Together* was a residential program, the pandemic necessitated that an alternate format be developed. When then CTU President, Fr. Mark Francis, announced last fall that all courses would be conducted online, a number of adjustments were made to *Together*. Enter the world of ZOOM!

Since September, Haerok, Jane, Nicole and I have met regularly to welcome guest speakers and to pray. The three young women have also "hung out" together weekly via Zoom, instead of in the *Together* Lounge.

During the three short years in which *Together* has been in existence, the Program has established strong bonds between these women religious from India, South Korea, and the United States. It our sincere hope that as *Together* moves forward, that this community be strengthened by new members from even more parts of our beautifully diverse world!

Together, let us live as Easter people!

Sincerely,



Maribeth Howell, OP, PhD,
STD
Together Program
Coordinator

**Application materials for the
fall 2021 cohort are available online!**

Visit the *Together* website:

WWW.TOGETHER-FORMATION.COM

WANT TO GET TO KNOW MORE ABOUT US?

**Join us for an online information session
on Wednesday, April 14.**

Register at together-formation.com

TOGETHER NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2021 EDITION

TOGETHER

A BLESSED EXPERIENCE



Participating in the *Together* Program for the past two years during my studies at Catholic Theological Union was a blessed experience for me. I was able to live inter-congregationally, interculturally and intergenerationally.

I am a Sister in perpetual profession from South Korea and a little older than other participants, so I felt tension before joining the *Together* community. However, participants have built a prosperous community, even though we have many differences such as cultures, languages, religious congregations and age. *Together* was a safe and reliable space for me, and I could ask questions about schoolwork

I have experienced deep solidarity despite our physical distance.

and cultural concerns to the Sisters. Additionally, I have listened and witnessed other Sisters' pains, complaints, moments of joy and growth.

In my first year of the *Together* Program in 2019, I lived with Sushma, Tracy and Jane on the 7th floor of the residence hall at CTU. Like other religious communities, our *Together* community did almost all things together: prayer, eating meals, watching movies, laughing while playing UNO after classes, exercising along Lake Michigan and enjoying other activities for fun. We even made the quick, two-minute walk across the street to school together! Other program participants in the Institute of Religious Formation or Sabbatical Program called us "together" for these reasons.

I have many happy memories and received valuable help from the *Together* participants and the first

Together Program coordinator, Karina Conrad. Karina helped prepare me for a spiritual direction internship interview by providing interview tips. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, we suddenly scattered into our own communities in mid-March of 2020. We were all unprepared for our program's sudden breakup, so we felt a sense of loss and regret.

The *Together* program staff informed us that the program would build a community in a virtual sense and space after the decision of CTU to offer remote-only classes. I hesitated to participate because I thought it is not very meaningful to participate in the *Together* Program if I cannot live together with other participants. I finally decided to join the program again. My previous *Together* experiences and the advice of my congregation's leadership impacted my decision.

My experiences this year are very different from last year's experiences. We are connected through the Zoom platform, and Jane and Nicole live in their community, and I live in the residence hall at CTU. However, I have experienced deep solidarity despite our physical distance and interactions. We try to spend time sharing and praying together, even with limited opportunities.

In one of our recent formation night sessions, Professor Chrissy Zaker of CTU guided a theological reflection. We were only able to reflect on one person's case due to time limitations. As a community, we continued with the theological reflections in our free time on Tuesday afternoon, and Maribeth, current *Together* Program Coordinator, joins us too. Despite the pandemic, we support each other through our effort to build community and build relationships. Unlike my initial worries, I have

noticed God invites me to be here and leads me in the best way.

At the end of the *Together* Program, I am grateful to our Lord and those who have supported this program in many ways. I am especially grateful to the president of CTU, Sr. Barbara Reid, OP, and the Religious Formation Conference staff, Ellen, Ryan, Kathy and Maribeth.

My experience in the *Together* program will be a precious memory, and my beloved Sisters will remain my friends even after returning to Korea this coming June. My journey here is more meaningful because Karina, Maribeth, Tracy, Sushma, Jane and Nicole have accompanied me. Thank you and love to all.

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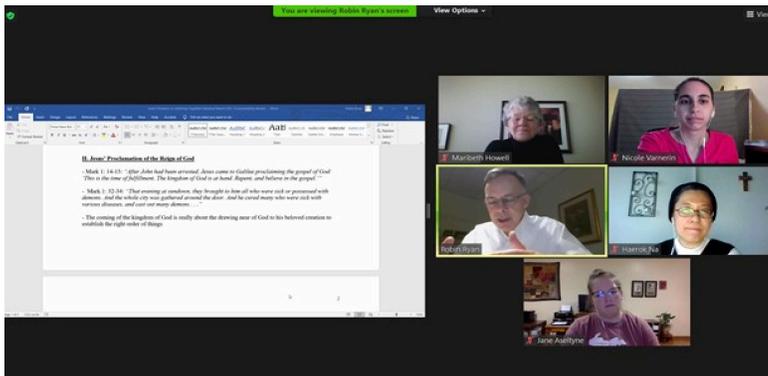
RECENT *TOGETHER* GUESTS



Linda Gibler, OP joins participants to explore with them **Creation Spirituality and Eucharist** on February 25th.



Chrissy Zaker, DMin covers **Theological Reflection and the Parables** with the group on March 11th.



Robin Ryan, CP gives the community an overview of **God's Presence in our Suffering** on March 25th.

TOGETHER PROGRAM ANNOUNCES TWO FORMATS FOR FALL OF 2021

RESIDENTIAL FORMAT

- Participants will live together in community while engaging in full-time study at CTU
- Participants will meet for weekly ongoing formation sessions or prayer with *Together* Distance students via Zoom on Thursday evenings
- Participants will share meals and prayer on a regular basis.

DISTANCE FORMAT

- Participants will live outside of a *Together* residence and engage in full-time study through CTU's online or face-to-face courses
- Participants will meet for weekly ongoing formation sessions or prayer with *Together* Residential students via Zoom on Thursday evenings
- Participants will Zoom weekly at a mutually agreed upon time with other *Together* Distance students, for the purpose of building a supportive community of learners

The *Together* Program is co-sponsored by the Religious Formation Conference and Catholic Theological Union. Currently, the Program is supported by a grant from GHR. Funding for this Program will expire in the summer of 2022, at which time a nominal fee will be charged for both residential and distance *Together* Participants.

For additional information about the *Together* program, please contact Maribeth Howell, OP, Coordinator of the *Together* Program at mhowell@relforcon.org or 313-319-1236.

Before applying to the *Together* Program, students must be accepted into a program of full-time study at CTU. Contact Herb Quinde for information regarding financial aid at hquinde@ctu.edu, text "CTU" to 58052, or visit www.ctu.edu/admissions.



At left: former participant, Tracy Kimme, SC gives a “thumbs up” outside her door in the *Together* community.

**Collaborative partnership sponsored by Catholic Theological Union
and the Religious Formation Conference**



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CONFERENCE

Questions? Please reach out.

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