

together

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2024



INTERCONGREGATIONAL ■ INTERCULTURAL ■ INTERNATIONAL

TOGETHER

SHARED PRAYER, MEALS, & FUN

Together is an inter-congregational, communal living experience for religious who are studying full-time at Catholic Theological Union (CTU). We are in our *seventh* year as a program jointly supported by the Religious Formation Council (RFC) and CTU. As we began our 7th year, there were some big changes.

This was the first time that all of the participants in the community last year graduated, so we began the year with all new students who would together redefine how *Together* forms community. You have met them all through an earlier email ([click here](#)) so this report will simply fill you in on life in the community.

This was also a year where we moved apartments as we were welcomed into the apartments of the Claretian community. *Together* currently rents a 3-bedroom and a 1-bedroom apartment which are right next door to each other. This allows us to have the living room in one apartment and the dining room in the second apartment. The women flow between the two as if it were one space. It is also lovely because several other CTU students are in the apartment complex as well as the Claretian formation community, so there is a good student presence. The Claretians have invited our community to join them for all of their liturgies, adoration and other community events.

With these two major shifts, it was a lot to get settled and become *Together*.

The apartments were ready for us the week the women arrived, so in addition to moving in themselves, the women helped us bring in all the furniture and supplies and get the space ready to be lived in. Once kitchen cabinets were filled and beds were put together, we were able to begin the year with an opening retreat.

Ryan Hoffmann and Sr. Jayne Aselyne from RFC were both able to spend time with the women during the opening retreat. Jayne was very helpful because she had lived in *Together* in the past and was able to answer their questions and suggest ways things had been done in other years. The retreat included time with Claretian Fr. Javier who welcomed them into the space and community. It also included time with other

THROUGH IT ALL, THEY HAVE SHOWN A GRACIOUS CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER. COMMUNITY IS MESSY AND TAKES INTENTIONAL WORK. BUT MOST OF ALL IT IS BEAUTIFUL AND HELPFUL!

CTU students that live in the building, especially the *Pathways* Community. Getting to know one another and find a schedule for shared prayer, shared meals, and shared fun were all parts of the retreat as well.

During the fall semester, the women participated in communal prayer

and meals, daily liturgies with the Claretians, and weekly formation nights. Thursday night community nights were filled with various plans. Participants also took part in the CTU common formation night with speakers on global diversity, they had an evening with Sr. Chioma Ahanihu who spoke on her new book, *Global Migrating Sisters*. They also had several evenings with their Program Liaison (me – Dr. Christina Zaker) where we discussed communication skills as a community and sharing of our charisms.



All in all it has been a fabulous start to the year. There are cultural implications for the participants as each of them come from a different country. As such, they are new to the academic environment of master's level work in the United States, and they are learning to live together as a truly *intercultural community*: tasting new foods, learning new prayers, laughing at new foibles, and a lot of other fun, too. Through it all, they have shown a gracious care for one another. Community is messy and takes intentional work but most of all it is beautiful and helpful! Being new to so many things, it is nice to have a community who understands and supports you. That is what being *Together* is all about.

Christina Zaker, D.Min.
Together Program Liaison and
Assistant Professor of Pastoral
Ministry, Catholic Theological Union

VISIT THE **TOGETHER** WEBSITE
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
THE PROGRAM!

WWW.TOGETHER-FORMATION.COM



MEET THE SISTERS IN THE PROGRAM

The four vowed women religious in this year's *Together* program took some time to respond to questions about themselves. [Click here](#) to learn more about their inspiring journeys to Chicago!

They are (from left in the header photo): [Sisters Leah Kinyua, SE](#); [Kabule Kazembe, OP](#); [Maribah Ishaq, SL](#); and [Abisola Clare Adelakun, FSPA](#).

**Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year from
the Together
community!**



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



ReligiousFormation
CONFERENCE

Questions? Please reach out.

RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

Email: rfc@relforcon.org

Phone: 773.675.8362

1200 W. 35th St #414

Chicago, IL 60609