



RED LETTER CHRISTIANS

2021-2022 annual report



OUR MISSION

Staying true to the foundation
of combining Jesus and justice,
Red Letter Christians mobilizes individuals
into a movement of believers who live out
Jesus' counter-cultural teachings.



JESUS & JUSTICE

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JESUS & JUSTICE

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Changing the *narrative* by changing the *narrators*

Many people are leaving the Church, but it is not Jesus they have rejected. It is a twisted version of American nationalism that is camouflaging itself as Christianity.

We're on a mission to bring folks closer to Jesus – closer to a Christianity with love and justice at its center.

For many people, it is their love for Jesus that has put them at odds with what evangelicalism has become known for.

As a faith-rooted organization dedicated to cultural change and shifting the narrative around faith and politics, we focus on **civic engagement**, **direct action**, and **movement building** through storytelling and social justice. We amplify the voices of those on the margins to help counter toxic evangelicalism and to incite transformative social change.

AT A GLANCE

55

events
hosted

419K

unique website
visits

264

monthly
sustainers

3.2

million people
reached online

#MARCH4MERCY

Nashville, TN

Activists made the nine-mile trek from Riverbend prison to the Tennessee state capitol building on Easter Sunday to nonviolently protest the death penalty and scheduled execution of Oscar Smith. Governor Bill Lee announced a temporary reprieve of the execution less than 2 hours before the scheduled execution.



"WE THE PEOPLE" RIDE

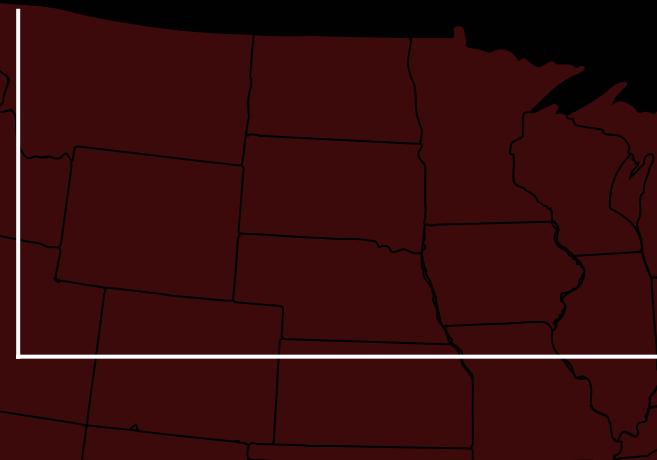
San Diego, CA to St. Augustine, FL

In partnership with Vote Common Good, Red Letter Christians turned out portions of a 3,200 mile ride along the entire U.S. / Mexico border and the U.S. coastline to listen, learn, and advocate for common good immigration practices and policies.

ADVOCACY TO END THE DEATH PENALTY

Washington, D.C.

On January 17, 2022, Red Letter Christians, with Abolitionist Action Committee and Death Penalty Action, gathered to protest the 45th year of executions in the United States' modern era. Eleven activists risked arrest on the steps of the Supreme Court. The group also brought the message to the U.S. Capitol Building and the White House, where the legislative and execution branches of government also have the power to stop executions. RLC hosted a service the evening before and live streamed the action so folks could join us from near and far.



NRA PRAYER BREAKFAST

Houston, TX

Red Letter Christians and the coalition "National Faith Leaders For Ending Gun Violence" prayed the names of the children murdered during the mass-shooting in Uvalde, Texas during a prayer breakfast during the NRA's annual convention in Houston. Those praying were threatened by arrest and forced to continue the prayer outside.

BREAKING THE SILENCE ON AMERICA'S VIOLENCE

Riverside Church, NYC

55 years after Dr. King made his historic speech, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," Red Letter Christians, LIVE FREE USA, and the Quincy Institute brought together 40 faith leaders, including Dr. King's daughter, Rev. Dr. Bernice King, at The Riverside Church in New York. Together, they reflected on Dr. King's depiction of America as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today," and recommitted to breaking the silence on America's obsession with violence and committing to walking King's path of nonviolence.



MORAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON

Washington, D.C.

On June 18, 2022, Red Letter Christians and the Poor People's Campaign descended on our nation's capital to stand with the 140 million poor and low wealth people of every race, creed, religion, in every region of this country. Together, we rose up against growing indignities, pain, injury, and death at the hands of immoral policies and interlocking injustices.



Death Penalty Abolition

Red Letter Christians, with our partners at Death Penalty Action, stand with advocates on the frontlines of the holy work of abolishing the death penalty. Because of our personal connections with many of the people on death row, we provide a window through which our movement can learn their stories, regrets, hopes, and prayers. Members of our movement have participated in local advocacy trainings in states where executions are most frequent. They are mobilized to take public, peaceful action to demand an end to the same state-sanctioned killing that crucified Christ.



Peace & Nonviolence

RLC is dedicated to finding solutions to our country's many justice issues without violence. Our community heard the awe-inspiring story of Sharletta Evans, a leader at the forefront of the Restorative Justice movement in America. Her three year old son, Casson, was killed in the cross-fire during a drive-by shooting, and she was moved by the Spirit to forgive her son's killer, correspond with him, and testify before Congress on the power of restorative justice. RLC also works closely with RawTools, Inc. by turning guns into garden tools - and transforming hearts and minds for peace - in creative ways.



Racial Justice

White people and people of color experience two very different versions of this country. With the rise of public debate on Critical Race Theory and how the often painful history of this nation should be taught to children, RLC provided several platforms to analyze the sharp differences between how white Evangelicals and Black Christians understand and preach the gospels and how Christianity has been used to uphold white supremacy. Racism intersects with all of our other action areas - the death penalty, immigration, Christian nationalism, etc. - but Christianity offers frameworks for us to work together to overcome America's original sin.



Christian Nationalism

One of the central issues drawing people away from the church is Christian Nationalism: the myth that Americans have been given a "Manifest Destiny" by God to spread our culture and values, exclude all those who do not fit in to a very narrow concept of what an American should be, that the United States is inextricably linked with Christianity, and that the United States holds a privileged position in God's eyes.

As members of Christians Against Christian Nationalism, Red Letter Christians has opened space for Christian leaders to directly confront the dangerous narrative that prioritizes white, Christian, heterosexual, cisgendered people and fails to see God's glory in the diversity of humanity.



Immigration

Red Letter Christians turned out for portions of a 3,200 mile ride along the entire U.S. / Mexico border and the U.S. coastline to listen, learn, and advocate for common good immigration practices and policies with our partners, Vote Common Good. As advocates biked from San Diego, CA to St. Augustine, FL, RLC shared the stories of advocates and raised awareness of the inhumane immigration policies that migrants face when searching for human dignity and refuge in the United States



Creation Care

In a Faith Forum on Creation Care and Colonization, climate activists and experts drew on their experiences as people of color and indigenous leaders described the parallels between humanity's impact of God's creation and rape culture. They argued that the U.S. has embraced a culture where the earth, marginalized people, and women can be exploited for profit with no repercussions.

Conversations happening within our movement analyze the way the church has been complicit in the exploitation of the earth. We're highlighting indigenous wisdom and the voices of those most impacted by climate change to find ways back to our deep interconnection with creation and find ways that our faith in Christ spark action for the dramatic, systematic change the world needs.

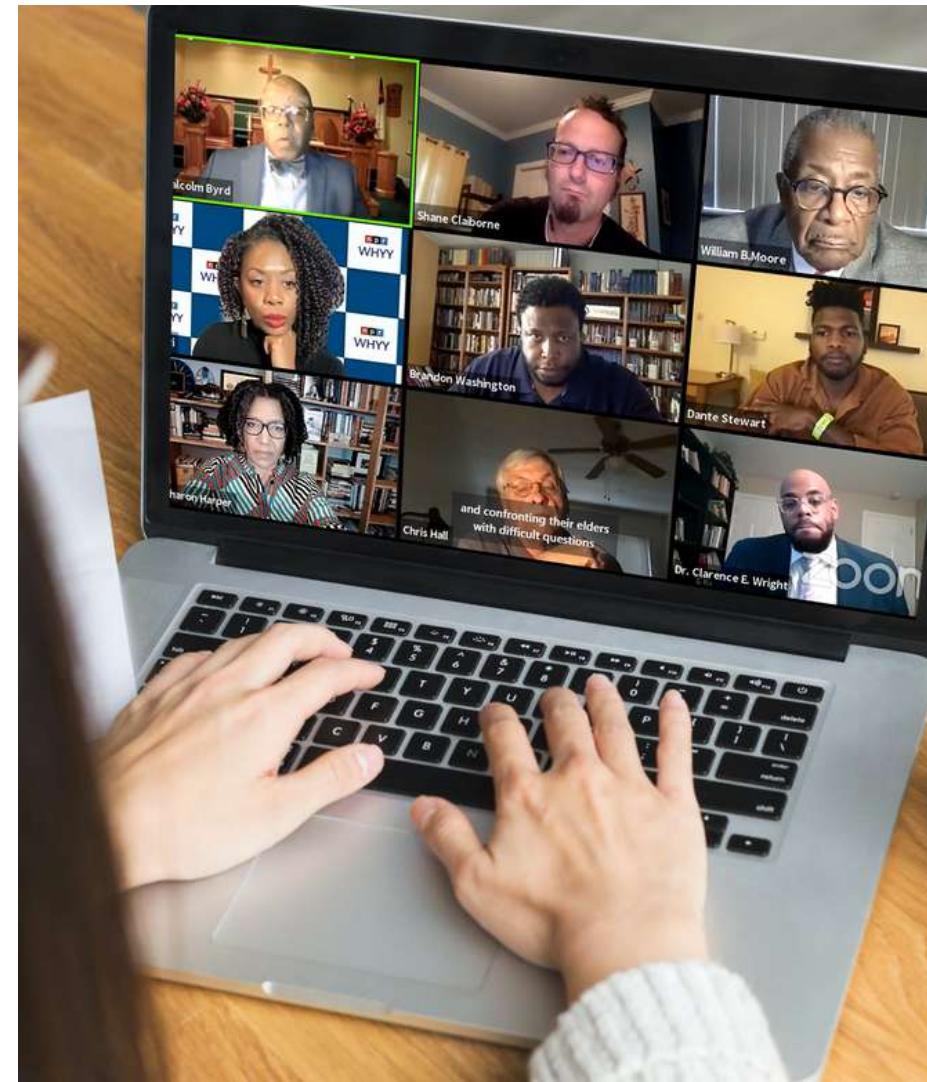
Featured Event: Faith Forum on Race & Justice

Thought leaders, activists, and scholars joined the Red Letter Christians community for a Faith Forum on Race and Justice: A Christ-Centered Response to the Culture Wars. Panelists, moderated by award winning WHYY TV journalist and on-air personality, Cherri Gregg, explored the schism between white Evangelicals and the Black church, in light of national debate on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Lisa Sharon Harper described the divide, noting that white Evangelical pastors have called CRT a threat to Christianity and an insult to the United States, while the Black church has understood it as simply telling the truth about the history of people of color – particularly Black people – in this country. The divide is well-recorded in voting patterns, as 81% of white Evangelicals voted for Donald Trump in 2016, while 94% of Black women voted for Hillary Clinton.

The speakers agreed on this fundamental divide in American Christianity today: White evangelicals often focus on individual sin and salvation, while the Black church – its history steeped in fighting for liberation – emphasizes systematic sin and the importance of building God's Kingdom here on earth.

Brandon Washington suggested that modern, American Evangelicals have been co-opted by partisan politics. He stressed the need for Evangelicals to embrace the “full gospel” in order to revive – meaning that they must embrace both salvation after death and commit to realizing God’s will on earth. Lisa Sharon Harper argued that our project for the next 500 years is to “decolonize” our faith – find the elements of Christianity that have their origins in Christ, not in the Europeans that shaped our faith for hundreds of years, and reorient our faith to center the teachings of our Brown, refugee, colonized Savior: Jesus Christ.

Red Letter Christians worked collaboratively with Forum Philly, the Pennsylvania Progressive Baptist Alliance, and the Tenth Memorial Baptist Church for the event.



Scan here to watch
the event online

Featured Advocacy: Stopping Melissa Lucio's Execution

Melissa Lucio, mother of 13, was sentenced to death in 2008 in Texas for a crime that never occurred. Her 2-year old daughter Mariah died two days after a fall down a flight of stairs – a tragic accident, but not a crime. Melissa, who was pregnant with twins at the time of her arrest, was taken into police custody, interrogated for hours, and immediately blamed for her daughter’s death. Melissa has always maintained her innocence since an initial coerced confession. The State relied on false evidence, and hid favorable evidence, to convict her. She has served 15 years on death row.

Red Letter Christians mobilized our movement alongside national organizations like Death Penalty Action to demand that Melissa be given a new trial and to raise awareness of her innocence. RLC hosted a conversation with Texas State Representatives Rep. Jeff Leach and Rep. Joe Moody, Co-Chairs of the Criminal Justice Reform Caucus, and they became instrumental in advocating to stop Melissa’s execution. RLC engaged our movement by hosting screenings of the documentary *The State of Texas vs. Melissa* in churches and providing opportunities for folks to hear in-person and virtually from Melissa’s family members.



Featured Blog: An interview with Tennessee activist Justin Jones on the March4Mercy

Justin Jones is the youngest lawmaker in the Tennessee State Capitol, representing District 52. Justin is a community organizer and joined us for the #March4Mercy in April 2022 while he was still running for office. Justin was interviewed by RLC editor, Rebekah Barber.

Rebekah: On a personal level, why are you deciding to participate in the upcoming March4Mercy?

Justin: I'm personally opposed to the death penalty and capital punishment because we know it disproportionately effects the poor and people of color. We know that it does not stop crime and violence from happening, but it perpetuates the cycle.

I'm participating because I think it's important to recognize that, just as we are seeking mercy, that all people are worthy of mercy and forgiveness and redemption. The state should not be the one to say who is worthy of living or dying—that's a very dangerous thing. This week is showing that it is a very dangerous precedent when we allow the state to take and give life.

My faith compels me to be there. I claim to profess to follow a crucified savior who was resurrected, but nonetheless, murdered by the state. The state should not have this power.

On a more personal level, I just think that we're perpetuating trauma when executions happen. Executions usually happen as it gets dark, and they have the law enforcement on horseback. It's a very traumatic thing. I think that is not something that any of us in this state need.

It's not bringing healing, but that trauma, that energy, that spirit—it lingers when you take a life and the whole exhibition of it is traumatizing our whole community. I hope that we can be a small part of fighting to end that and that it might contribute to some social healing in our community: a community that is healing from so much violence.

Here in Tennessee – the birthplace of the Klan; here in Tennessee—where people are dying from a myriad of reasons—where there's lack of healthcare, poverty, and police shootings.

Here in Nashville, there are so many acts of violence. Why would we contribute to that and compound that trauma we're already dealing with here in Tennessee?



Featured Podcast: National Town Hall on Abortion

Red Letter Christian's National Town Hall on Abortion featured a diverse group of leaders who share a common faith as Christians, but who also have different perspectives on the issue of abortion and reproductive rights.

These conversations included deeply personal experiences related to abortion, dug deeply into the long-standing debate among Christians, modelled respectful disagreement on a contentious issue, and offered several important ways to move forward together, as a Church and as a nation.

The two town halls reached two thousand people via the RLC podcast, 45 thousand on Facebook, and 1.2 thousand on YouTube, and continues to be downloaded by hundreds on a regular basis.

The Red Letter Christians community grappled with concepts like the meaning of being “pro-life” from conception to natural death and what it would mean for Christians to stand for life throughout all life stages. Our community dissected how race and purity culture overlap with our conversations about abortion. Most importantly, speakers emphasized that all people – from abortion patients to abortion protestors – are beloved by, and made in the image of, our shared Savior Jesus Christ.

A member of our community commented, “Thanks to all speakers who were brave enough, bold enough, and willing to discuss such a heated and challenging subject with such grace, mercy, respect and dignity. Refreshing and so needed.”



Scan here to listen
and subscribe



Book Club

The RLC community gathers once a month to read a book and speak with an author in our community on matters of Jesus and justice.

If you are an author or publisher interested in promoting a book, please review our advertising packages.

[Book Club Playlist](#)

Faith Forums

Faith Forums provide an opportunity for our movement to learn more about some of the most urgent justice issues of our time. Renowned experts, activists, faith leaders, and powerful storytellers join the RLC community for a transformative conversation to spark action.

[Faith Forum Playlist](#)

Monthly Morning Prayer

Our community is dedicated to coming together on the first of every month to center ourselves on Christ through prayer. Striving to build God's Beloved Community here in our time is tough work, but we use this time to refuel and recommit to living into God's plan for our lives.

[Morning Prayer Playlist](#)



Financials

Red Letter Christians had a banner fiscal year, bringing in 114% of our budgeted income and spending 106% of our budgeted expenses. Total income exceeds expenses by \$60,047.12.

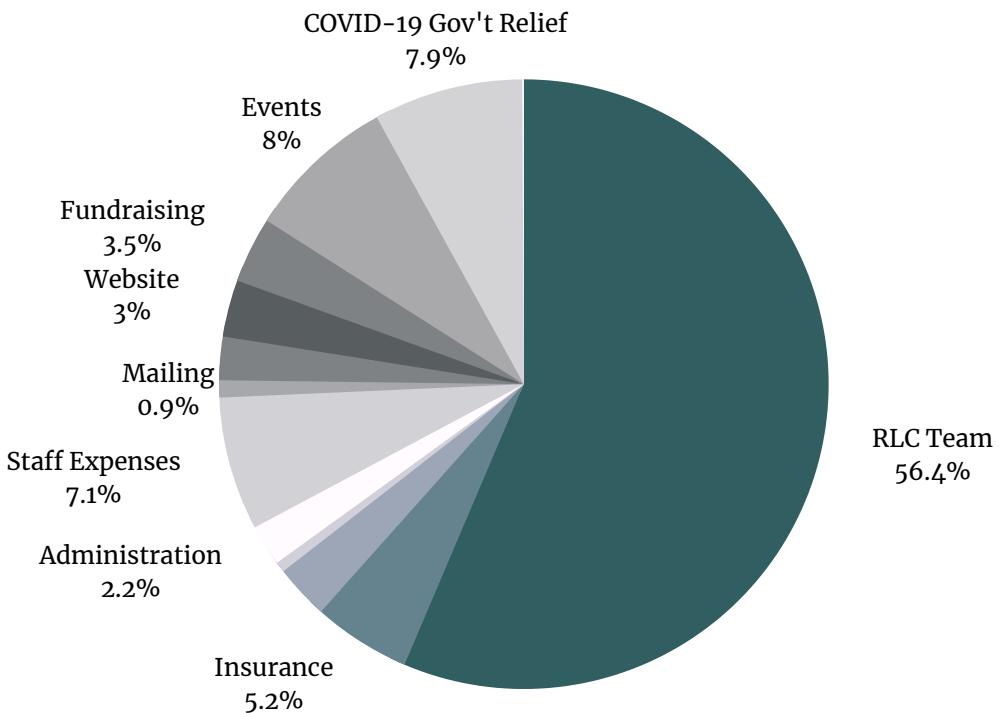
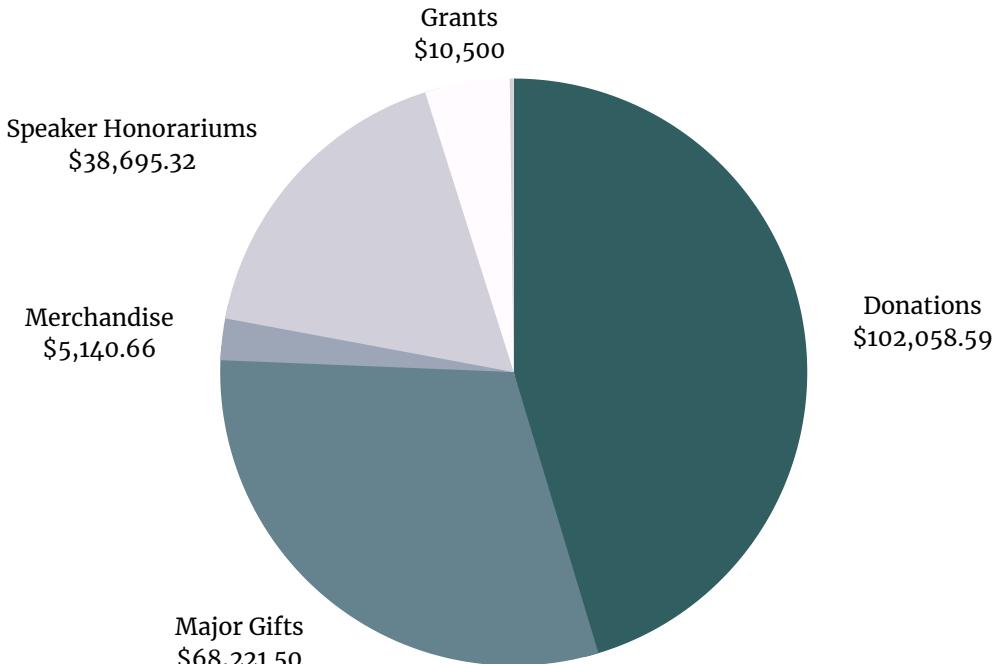
We were able to have such an excellent year in large part due to our generous network of donors and an increase in Shane's speaking income, which is slowly coming back to pre-pandemic numbers.

We were able to exceed our revenue projections mostly thanks to donors and our strong, growing base of sustainers. Sustainers are our monthly donors who provide regular, predictable income. We currently have 264 monthly sustainers giving ~\$7,000/month, or \$84,000/year.

In the 2021-2022 FY, we received about \$68,221.50 in major gifts, comprised by 30 separate gifts.

Due to the generosity of our engaged donors, we are closer than ever to being able to hire full time staff members with benefits - folks who will set the course for RLC and work to advance our mission as we grow.

INCOME



EXPENSES

This work is possible due to the sustained commitment of folks who are dedicated to building a Christianity that looks like Jesus, acts like Jesus, and loves like Jesus. Thank you.

