

## 2018 CIB Symposium

### Wisdom Connections: Timeless Traditions in Technological Times (also known as “T4”)

S. Lynn McKenzie

The purpose of T4 is to gather the wisdom of our Benedictine sisters & brothers through video. And secondly, to make this information available to initial & ongoing formation programs in monasteries around the world. This can be done through the magic of technology!

An additional purpose of T4 is to connect newer members of our monasteries through videoconferencing. They can discuss videos they have watched on T4 or discuss articles or books they have read. The hope is that newer members will get to know one another and to be able to support one another in each other’s vocation. These connections can build lasting relationships.

How did T4 come about? The T4 project began 1 December 2014. The concepts used in the program were a dream of both the 55 & Under Benedictines and a group of prioresses in the United States. That group of prioresses drew up a plan and wrote a grant application. They were successful in obtaining a very generous grant.

The 1<sup>st</sup> three years of the T4 project were funded by a generous grant from the GHR Foundation in the United States of America. The funds were used to purchase equipment, gather committee members for meetings, and pay salaries for one part-time person and one full time person. A Core Team and three sub-committees of Sister volunteers organized and implemented the project, with the assistance of the Sister staff members.

From its inception until November 30, 2017, the program was limited to women’s communities in the continental United States who had women in initial formation. Members who participated in the program included 27 monasteries from across the USA.

Beginning **1 December 2017** the T4 program was opened up to all English-speaking Benedictine communities anywhere in the world. It was also opened up to be used for Ongoing Formation as well as Initial Formation within the communities.

A new web site was created to facilitate the new dimensions of the program. It was also restructured to be more user-friendly for the members. T4 is “housed” on its very own server. Through the server, T4 is able to offer unique user names and passwords for each community. This allows us to keep the program limited to subscribing monasteries only. This also protects the work product of the speakers whose presentations are available through subscription only.

The tools to help members search and use the T4 resources have been updated. For members who like instruction manuals, the **T4 Technology Handbook** has been re-created. It includes instructions with pictures specific to the T4 program.

Because the GHR grant money has been spent and is no longer available, the T4 program now needs other financial means to sustain itself. This is done by charging a membership fee to participate in the T4 program. Currently the membership fee is \$500 annually per monastery.

Here is what membership in T4 provides:

- Access to the T4 secure digital library with presentations by Benedictine scholars such as Sister Irene Nowell, Sister Ephrem Hollermann, Sister Joan Chittister, Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, Fr. Jerome Kodell, Fr. Terrence Kardong, and many more.
- Some topics include Benedictine History, Liturgy of the Hours, Profession/Vows, Rule of St. Benedict, Scripture, Benedictine Spirituality, and Personal Awareness/Development.
- Access to a full list of all presentations in the T4 library with “clickable” links that will take you directly to the biographies, videos, and handouts.
- This document with the full list of presentations is updated as videos are added to the library.
- Currently in the T4 library there are 56 sets of videos comprising of 300 videos by 39 different presenters.
- Access to biographies of the presenters, including titles and descriptions to all presentations s/he has in the T4 library.
- Access to handouts for presentations, and any other supporting documents (for example, power point slides) provided by the presenters. These can be printed out or saved electronically and used for classes.
- Access to T4 specific instructional tools that show how to use various parts of T4. These tools include the T4 handbook and homemade T4-specific videos for things such as working with the website, using ZOOM, and more.
- Opportunity for your initial formation members and initial formation directors to participate in T4 Relationship Building groups using the video conferencing program called ZOOM. [There is also opportunity for other groups to organize themselves into relationship building groups, but these would not be coordinated by the volunteer committee members.]
- These initial formation and formators groups are organized by T4 volunteer committee members and run by T4 volunteer moderators.
- Access to T4-specific technical support for your T4 contact person.
- Access to a shared Dropbox folder with all the resources you need to use the T4 program. NOTE: You do NOT need a Dropbox account to use this resource.
- Video editing for approved presentations that your members might choose to donate to the T4 library. They must be in English.

Who are members of T4 now?

- ☀ As of April 2018 there are 41 T4 members.
- ☀ They are women's AND men's communities.
- ☀ They are from 5 different countries: USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia and Lithuania. Please help us add your country to the list!
- ☀ 27 of the 41 members have at least one member in initial formation.

What is the future of T4? T4 will:

- Continue to add new presenters, video tape them, edit taped presentations, and post to the video library. We hope it will become more international! So please add ideas for speakers to add to the T4 video library.
- Continue to discern and plan for the future of T4.
- Continue to invite Benedictine communities world-wide to be members of the T4 program.
- Enhance and update resources as new tools are available or as resources change.
- Continue to provide training materials for using the T4 resources.
- Keep the web site updated and as user-friendly as possible.
- Invite feedback and listen to members for affirmations, suggestions and concerns. Be open to your ideas for making T4 better!

How is T4 administered?

- ▶ The T4 program is administered under the “umbrella” of the American Benedictine Formation Conference (ABFC), which is under the American Conference of Benedictine Prioresses (CBP).
- ▶ Sister Michelle Sinkhorn, OSB (Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana USA) is the **Program Director & Technology Administrator** of the T4 program and she reports to the ABFC chair. I have her business cards and an information sheet from her to distribute to you.
  - ▶ She administers the program – memberships, fees, software, communication with new presenters, video editing, marketing, etc.
  - ▶ This is a full-time position for the first year (2018/2019); then the intent is for it to become a part-time position thereafter.

- ▶ The T4 program has two committees with volunteer members.
  - ▶ Relationship Committee
  - ▶ Content Committee

## CONCLUSION

If your monastery is interested in joining T4, please contact Sister Michelle Sinkhorn by email: [t4srmichelle@gmail.com](mailto:t4srmichelle@gmail.com). She can explain everything you need to know to use the excellent materials available through T4. I am also available for questions while here in Rome.

T4 opens a new world of possibilities for formation opportunities, both initial formation and ongoing formation. In the T4 library you will have access to presentations not available anywhere else. Many of these presenters are known both nationally and internationally. The Benedictine women in the USA are very proud of what has been accomplished in the creation and ongoing maintenance and improvement of T4. We hope you will join us and see why we are rightfully proud and grateful for what the generous grant money enabled us to do.

Lynn Marie McKenzie, OSB  
Benedictine Sisters of the Federation of St. Scholastica  
Sacred Heart Monastery  
916 Convent Road NE  
Cullman AL 35055 USA  
[lynmckenzieosb@gmail.com](mailto:lynmckenzieosb@gmail.com)