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Millionaire Tim Busch, co-founder and chairman of the board of the Napa Institute (Newscom/ZUMAPRESS/The Orange County Register/Eugene Garcia)



by Dan Morris-Young

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The Napa Institute, an organization that promotes traditionalist Catholicism with an annual gathering of largely affluent Catholics in Napa, California, as well as other conferences in major cities, will now offer legal and organizational resources for Catholic non-profits from healthcare to education. The new endeavor will be called the Napa Legal Institute.

Announced in late 2018 and officially launched May 2 at a Mass and event at the Catholic University of America's Busch School of Business, the Napa Institute offshoot will help connect non-profits "faithful to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church" with "Catholic lawyers who can provide legal counsel on corporate, tax and other non-litigation matters," Legal Institute executive director Josh Holdenried told NCR in an email.

Holdenried said the new entity will "not provide legal advice to organizations" per se, but its own spin-off, the [Napa Legal League](#), will develop corporate education and non-litigation legal resources "that lay apostolates need."

The Legal Institute itself, the executive director added, is "focused on developing ... working groups and recruiting professionals" from law, accounting and the non-profit sector "to chair each group."

"We are open to what the Holy Spirit has in store for the future regarding, for example, whether NLI may offer pro-bono or low-bono legal services at some point," he said.

Legal services will be also offered in the areas of canon law, employment law and education, among others, he said.

In a [July newsletter](#), the Legal Institute announced that its Healthcare Working Group would be headed by Louis Brown, executive director of [Christ Medicus Foundation](#), a non-profit that "champions authentically Christ-centered health care at a moment when many are calling for a health care system that radically expands abortion, limits religious freedom, and dramatically undermines person-centered care," states its website.

The newsletter provided an "abstract of a forthcoming white paper for nonprofits that wish to make Christ-centered healthcare decisions."

The abstract addresses various healthcare options for nonprofits including standard insurance plans, direct primary care, Christian health sharing and medical savings accounts.



Pope Francis accepts a jersey from Tim Busch during an audience at the Vatican May 10, 2019, as Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley looks on. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Holdenried noted that the Healthcare Working Group would be reaching out to the national Catholic Health Association, the National Catholic Bioethics Center and the U.S. bishops' conference committees whose working areas embrace healthcare.

The July newsletter also noted that Legal Institute board members include:

- [Leo Leonard](#), executive vice president of [The Federalist Society](#) who served three terms as chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; he has also advised President Donald Trump on judicial selections.
- [Dominican Fr. Dominic Legge](#), director of the [Thomistic Institute](#) and assistant professor in Systematic Theology at the [Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception](#) in Washington, D.C.
- [William Mumma](#), CEO and board chairman of the [Becket Fund for Religious Liberty](#), well-known for its free-exercise-of-religion litigation.

Asked how the Napa Legal Institute's work might compare to that of the Becket Fund, Holdenried replied, "Our mission is similar to Becket's in that we believe religious liberty is an inalienable right for all. With that said, we are focused on non-litigation legal issues, whereas Becket is focused on litigation."

Currently headquartered at the Dominican House of Studies at Catholic University, in early August the Legal Institute will be "expanding to downtown Washington, D.C. ... where we will share office space with the [Ethics and Public Policy Center](#). ... four blocks from the White House and across the street from the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle," the newsletter stated.

The Legal Institute is the latest initiative of the Napa Institute, co-founded in 2010 by [Tim Busch](#), high profile conservative Catholic activist and philanthropist.

Other Napa Institute efforts have included conferences on topics including [labor](#) and [church sex abuse reform](#).

Future programs include an [Annual Principled Entrepreneurship Conference](#) Oct. 21-22 in Manhattan and a "priest conference" titled [A Faithful Echo](#) Oct. 28-30 in Denver, Colorado.

[Dan Morris-Young is NCR's West Coast correspondent.]

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