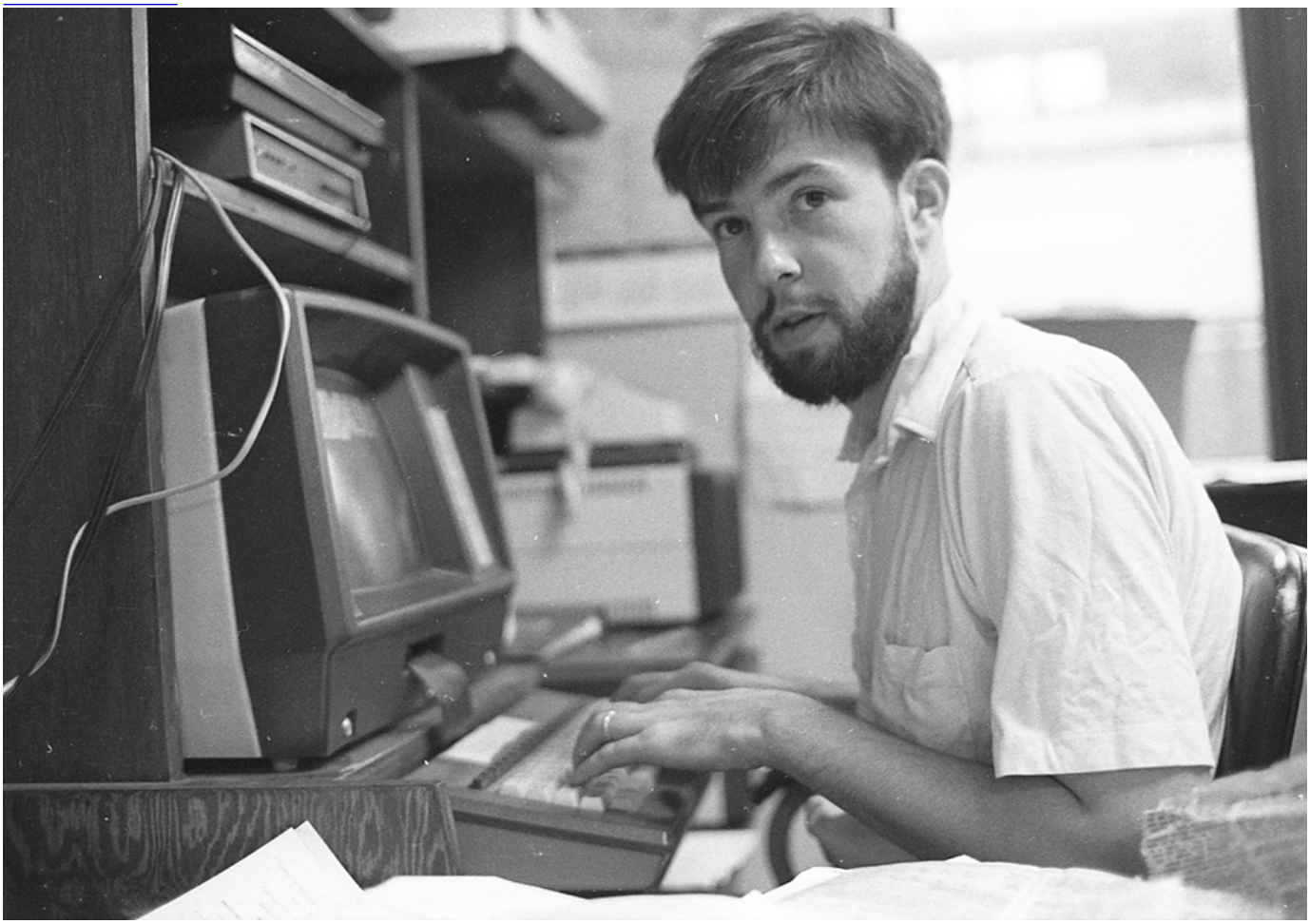
Opinion

NCR Voices



Joe Feuerherd, intern and future NCR publisher and editor, works in NCR's Washington Bureau office in 1984. (NCR photo/Steve Askin)



by James V. Grimaldi

Executive Editor

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The National Catholic Reporter has more readers than it has ever had in its nearly 61 years as a nonprofit news organization.

There's a reason for our success.

NCR has worked to provide readers more urgent, important and relevant information about our turbulent world. We offer a unique insight into matters of concern and faith. Our writers and editors have strived in recent months to deliver stories that are more compelling, interesting and useful. And we have stayed on top of the essential news that matters to our readers most, particularly regarding the changes at the Vatican.

In 2025 so far, NCRonline.org has recorded 9.4 million users — the highest number of readers we've ever had at this point in a calendar year.

With that increased traffic, even the media industry is beginning to take note. Nieman Lab, a publication covering thought leadership in journalism by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, mentioned NCR in its first monthly rankings of the top 25 nonprofit news sites in the United States. (Hat tip to former GSR editor Gail DeGeorge for pointing out the article to me.)

In June, NCR ranked No. 15, with 1,138,093 visits, and Nieman noted that in May NCR readership was even better.

Nieman Lab's Joshua Benton wrote: "Fun fact: In May's data, the No. 3 slot was held by the National Catholic Reporter, riding the traffic tsunami brought by the conclave that produced Pope Leo XIV. 'We always get a bump when we're covering elections,' quipped CalMatters CEO Neil Chase, 'and I guess they do too.' "



The Washington Bureau office for National Catholic Reporter is pictured in 1973. (NCR file photo)

Our 2025 numbers compare favorably to this time last year, when we had 4.4 million users, GM Hernandez says. While some of this traffic may be attributed to our coverage of the death of Pope Francis and the conclave that elected Leo, NCR's growth has remained strong since then. July brought our largest July audience on record, with 945,000 readers.

There's a good reason for increased interest in our work. As NCR board member Sr. Simone Campbell told me recently, our work has never been more important. Day in and day out, our journalists deliver world-class journalism that shines a light on the most important issues of the day — President Donald Trump's mass deportation plans, the Republican cuts to taxes for the rich and Medicaid for the poor, the growth of extremism in our culture and divisions in our Catholic Church over domestic politics.

Many of those stories emerge from Washington, D.C., where NCR has had a presence for decades. The first Washington Bureau office for NCR opened in March 1972, and this week we published one of the articles from our first full-time Washington correspondent, Rick Casey.

When he announced the new office on the tenth floor of the National Press Building, publisher Donald J. Thorman said, "The purpose of the new office is to strengthen and expand our coverage of both religious news and news of what is happening at the point where religion intersects with secular concerns."



The Washington Bureau office for National Catholic Reporter is pictured in 1973. (NCR file photo)

"Since the Second Vatican Council, the parallel concepts of subsidiarity and decentralization have strengthened the institutional church's decision-making power at the national level. The U.S. Catholic Conference, the bishops' administrative arm [now the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops], is more than ever a place where news is generated and where information about what is happening elsewhere in the church may be obtained," he said.

This July, NCR moved out its office in the United Methodist Building across the street from the Supreme Court and the U.S. Capitol, where earlier this year Brian Fraga covered Supreme Court arguments and news editor Carol Zimmermann edited him. Last year, Camillo Barone wrote up his interview with Rep. Nancy Pelosi, the former House speaker and Democrat from California.

But we haven't left the nation's capital. We have relocated to a space called Open Gov Hub, a co-work space with charitable organization members that support investigative news and do good works around the world such as work to protect the environment, combat global hunger, and keep government honest and open. I am working in the office, which will be used by our D.C.-based staff and visiting staff when they are in Washington.

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Thanks to you, our readers and donors, for making these offices possible over the decades so we can keep you apprised of our government and bishops' activities — and keep them honest.

NCR's goal in D.C. has not strayed much from what Thorman, the publisher in the 1970s, outlined in 1972. The difference is that reporters don't need to be in D.C. as much as they used to, and they can report on these stories remotely (as Brian Roewe did with this scoop).

Thorman said the primary responsibility of the Washington office staff would be investigative reporting of the major issues, events, trends and personalities of

importance to NCR readers, including governmental matters related to the newspaper's specialized news interests.

We're still doing that decades later.

Related: NCR in 1972: Richard Nixon chases Catholic voters amid future turning point