



April 2021

## LCWR to Hold Virtual Assembly August 11 - 13, 2021

The 2021 LCWR assembly, to be held virtually from August 11-13, promises to be a rich experience as leaders gather to consider all that these times hold for religious life in service of a world in need. The assembly theme, **The Realm of Transformation: Creating Space for the Future**, will focus the days on the questions that can deepen the ground on which religious stand in the midst of a world in upheaval.

The assembly planners aim to offer three days that will leave participants refreshed, renewed, and inspired to continue the ministry of religious life leadership. The days will include time for prayer and ritual, presentations, input on the LCWR Discerning Our Emerging Future Initiative, and ample time for many conversations among participants. The schedule will be gentle.

### Keynote Presentation

The assembly will feature Daughter of the Holy Spirit of Mexico, **Mercedes Leticia Casas Sánchez**, as the keynote speaker. (Mercedes was originally going to speak at the in-person 2020 LCWR assembly before it was changed to a virtual format.) For those who have participated in events of the Confederation of Latin American Religious (CLAR), Mercedes is well-known for her leadership, wisdom, and creativity, having served as CLAR president. After completing her term in community leadership, Mercedes was invited



by the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to join its staff in 2018 in Rome where she now resides.

### Outstanding Leadership Award

The conference will also honor **Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN** with the LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award which she was to receive at the 2020 assembly. A Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, Patricia serves on the leadership team of the East-West unit of her community based in Baltimore, Maryland and previously worked for nine years as executive director of Pax Christi USA. She has spent nearly 30 years committed to anti-racism training and dismantling white privilege and has worked with countless religious congregations and lay groups on diversity-racism issues. She also served the National Black Sisters Conference as its president from 1996-2001.



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*From the LCWR Presidency*

## Walking Through the Portal: A Kairos Moment

Jane Herb, IHM — LCWR President-Elect

As I sit down to write this reflection, it is almost one year ago that the COVID pandemic was upon us and we were staying safe at home. And then, in May, the murder of George Floyd brought us face-to-face with the pandemic of racism.

Recently, during an evening of reflection in my local community, the leader referenced a quote of Barbara Holmes, the author of *Race and the Cosmos*: “As I considered it, I knew that the truth of the matter was that we were living within an old story, and a new story needed to be told, but we didn’t have the language for it.” In her book, Holmes explores the way we re-imagine how we find meaning and dream of a community-called-beloved. Now, LCWR’s commitment to “A Spirit Call within a Call” to address systemic racism is leading us to the truth of an old story as we are seeking a new story of reparation and inclusiveness.

As I continued to ponder these words, I realized that they also spoke to me about another LCWR journey -- that of discerning our evolving future. In recent years, we have been invited to look at data from our own congregations to determine whether we have enough members for a chapter and what the potential for leadership within our congregation is. Data gives us a snapshot of our reality, but we are invited to move beyond the data to possibilities.

In February, I had the opportunity to attend



a retreat day with the Scranton IHMs and the Nuns & Nones. The retreat was entitled, “Through the Portal Together: Repair and Radical Imagination.” In preparing for our time together, I had reflected on the portal of the COVID pandemic. I had asked myself how many times we had heard that we would be happy when we finally went back to normal. But isn’t the call of the Spirit to not return to normal considering either pandemic -- that of COVID or racism? I am challenged to look at the future of religious life in a similar manner as I come to realize that the structures that once held us will sustain us no longer.

Over the course of that retreat day, Nuns & Nones leaders Katie Gordon, Adam Horowitz, and Brittney Koteles used the image of our stories as the wind at our backs as we face our future. We are at a *kairos* moment, a new moment in shaping the future of religious life. The Discerning Our Emerging Future Planning Group has worked tirelessly and shared with us various emerging themes and focus areas. As I ponder these areas, I see them as roads leading us to our emerging future. And, I find the words of Walter Brueggemann to be an invitation and a challenge: “The prophet engages in

futuring fantasy. The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented, for questions of implementation are of no consequence until the vision can be imagined.” What is that new story that needs to be told?



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## Reflections on Accepting and Embracing Sexual Diversity Webinar

On February 18, LCWR offered the webinar, "Accepting and Embracing Sexual Diversity." Presenter Lynn M. Levo, CSJ, led the more than 250 leaders who participated through an experience of working in groups on scenarios that mirror the types of situations religious life leaders face today regarding sexual diversity. Two of the webinar participants offer their reflections below on the experience.

### Betsy Conway, CSJ -- Brighton, Massachusetts

This webinar offered me a chance to talk out loud with others on a similar quest of living God's love about a subject that is not often discussed in church circles. As one who has lived a fairly mainstream life -- white, privileged, straight, Christian -- I have not experienced what it is like to have to wonder where I fit in the scheme of things. However, as I have listened to the sacred, painful stories of others, it has become clear that it is my responsibility to enlarge my circle of understanding and loving if I am to be truly faithful to the God who created all that is. Having this time together on zoom enabled me to listen to others who are also seeking to learn and to grow ever more open to each person before us, and to be a voice that echoes the inclusive love of our one God. As we walk together these paths toward deeper appreciation of the riches God has bestowed on us in our diversity, I am grateful to those willing to teach us that we may all flourish.

### Anne Marie Miller, RSM -- Silver Spring, Maryland

What I noticed stirring within me throughout this webinar was the question "why are we having this conversation now, at this time, with members of LCWR, the leaders of our congregations?" The only answer that came to me was "Listen, learn, dialogue, and discern." What if I never again have to read about the suicide or murder of a young person who identifies as transgender? What if I never have to hear from a woman in my community that she is leaving religious life because I, or members of my community, have made her invisible because of her sexual identity?

What if, as leaders of sponsored ministries, we are so grounded in the values of the Gospel and charism of our communities that we will always stand in solidarity with persons who face discrimination, oppression, and unjust decisions?

The focus of our gathering was accepting and embracing the reality of sexual diversity. May it be so! May we choose to be radically inclusive, welcoming, and compassionate to every person we encounter and not be fearful of the differences and diversity we experience in people. This does not mean that others who are different than I are somehow deficient in their being but rather are gifted, wonderfully-made persons reflecting the image of God.

## LCWR to Hold Virtual Assembly

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The assembly will be enhanced by the gifts of facilitator Debbie Asberry and liturgist Kathy Wray.



Debbie Asberry



Kathy Wray

Although the decision to not have an in-person assembly is disappointing, LCWR will take advantage of the virtual platform to create the best experience possible for its members. Leaders are also encouraged to give themselves the gift of these three days. The conference leadership suggests that every leader try to set aside August 11-13 just for the assembly. Last year some leaders left their workplaces and went together to another location (some to their institute's retreat or vacation house) so that they could focus solely on the assembly and reported that it made a great difference. During these very challenging times, all LCWR leaders are urged to attend to their own leadership development and well-being for these three days.



by Mary Hughes, OP

The Discerning Our Emerging Future working group continues to meet weekly to incorporate the wisdom and perspectives of organizations working in collaboration with LCWR and its members. The Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI), the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), the Association of Latin American Missionary Sisters (AHLMA), the Religious Formation Conference (RFC), and the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC) are among those who have been invited to participate. Possible ways to cross-reference information from their websites is being explored for easy access to share valuable information.

Conversation partners have begun connecting with one another. Every effort has been made to match the gifts and experiences of a former religious leader with the needs of a leadership team requesting accompaniment. Partners have expressed, "This is what we do for one another." On the part of a team, delight is expressed to dialogue with an experienced leader about their institute's needs and to explore future possibilities. [Applications](#) continue to be accepted in the members' login section.

## Global Sisters Report Covers Impact of Pandemic on Religious Life

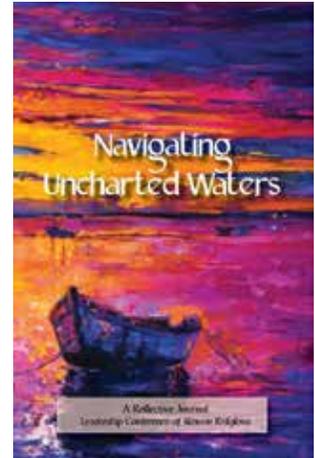
**G**lobal Sisters Report invited LCWR to contribute to a series on how COVID-19 has impacted religious life throughout the world. Organizations serving religious life globally contributed overviews and stories of the pandemic's reach into their lives and ministries.

Three members of LCWR's national board -- Eileen Haynes, SCL; Theresa Sandok, OSM; and Michelle Marie Stachowiak, CSSF -- authored [reflections](#) for the series.

## Extra Copies of Two Recent LCWR Publications Available

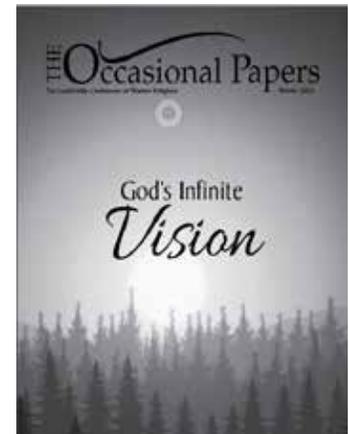
### 2021 Reflection Book

The 2021 LCWR reflection book, [Navigating Uncharted Waters](#) is in the mail. Some extra copies are still available at the cost of \$6.00 each. Discounted prices are available for orders larger than 10 copies. Revenue from this LCWR project helps defray the costs of the resources and programs the conference provides its members. [Orders may be placed here.](#)

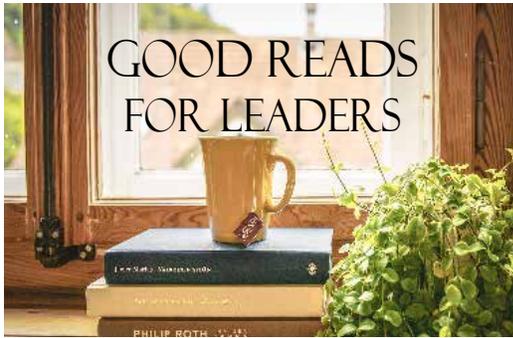


### Winter 2021 Occasional Papers

Some extra copies of the Winter 2021 issue of LCWR's journal, *Occasional Papers*, entitled, *God's Infinite Vision*, are available [for purchase online](#). Cost is \$5.00 per copy.



Please remember  
LCWR's generous  
donors and their  
intentions  
in your prayer.



## Mystical Hope: Trusting in the Mercy of God

by Cynthia Bourgeault

Recommended by Jane Hotstream, RSM

In search for hope, I read *Mystical Hope* and now I recommend it to you as a book not only to be read but to be experienced.

Cynthia Bourgeault invites us on a journey into the heart of God and, if the reader surrenders to the journey, she deepens her desire and ability to see as God sees, to be as God is.

Bourgeault offers insights that reposition our understanding of grace, mercy, hope, the body of Christ, meditation, contemplation and action, and ourselves. In entering these “repositionings,” we come to know what we already know and yet, not know: that the source of hope is not external, not connected to an outcome, not an attitude one possesses. We come to know that we do not have hope, but hope has us, holds us, and through us assists us and all of creation to relax into God, into the creation God sees and loves.

The journey through *Mystical Hope* offers us this: Touching the heart of God, seeing and feeling the ever-present God, is the source of all hope, strength and joy flowing through our bodies and out to the world. This gives us the energy to face each day, knowing better what Julian of Norwich said so long ago, “all shall be well ... there is a force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and never lets us go.”

As leaders with this knowledge, we walk in hope, held in hope.

The dates below are tentative due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will be kept up to date on plans as they progress.

All LCWR activities remain virtual due to the priority of health and safety concerns

## Upcoming LCWR Dates

**LCWR Assembly**  
*Virtual*  
August 11 - 13, 2021

**Leading from Within Retreat**  
*Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona*  
January 16 - 21, 2022

**LCWR New Leaders Workshop**  
*Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet*  
*St. Louis, Missouri*  
March 31 - April 3, 2022

**LCWR Assembly**  
*St. Louis, Missouri*  
August 9 - 12, 2022



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## Conversations on Religious Life for the Future

Over the course of the last 10 months, two representatives from three organizations serving religious have been in conversations about religious life leadership, sustainability, and what seems to be emerging in religious life. The organizations -- **Giving Voice** (represented by Adriana Calzada Vázquez, CCVI and Sarah Kohles, OSF), **Leadership Collaborative** (Annmarie Sanders, IHM and Vicki Wuolle, CSA) and **LCWR** (Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ and Carol Zinn, SSJ) met virtually several times with facilitator Debbie Asberry. Their conversations convinced them that much was to be learned by listening to the diverse perspectives of each group and that the circle of conversation should be widened.



- It needs spaciousness, filled with generous hospitality for endings, exploration, contemplative silence, the artistic within us, new ways of gathering, questions, “what ifs,” “both-and,” and solidarity with a suffering world.
- The charism of religious life hopefully is not a melting pot of charisms; yet it might be a weaving of the unique threads of multiple charisms as a small group of younger women religious carries this life into a new time and place.
- Women religious in every age cohort have something to contribute to the letting go and the blessing of endings, and to the spaciousness and hospitality needed to nurture the seeds of the emerging new.
- The health and quality of relationships make or break this life -- whether it is our “now” or our “future.”

The group decided to host a series of three conversations with 90 people over the course of three months. Each organization invited 30 people to commit to these three-hour virtual dialogue sessions. (LCWR is represented by two members from each of its 15 regions.

The first conversation session was held on March 7. Two LCWR members who are participating share below their reflections on this first conversation.



*Some of the conversation participants*

### Mary Jo Nelson, OLMV -- Huntington, Indiana

During the conversation on “imagining religious life in the future,” I experienced energy, passion, and hope. The conversation clarified and expanded my thinking. I offer these thoughts...

- The future begins in the now, with a clarity that this life is a life, a life deeply rooted in the paschal mystery, living at the edge of what is ending and what is emerging.
- Our life will be in smaller groups; it will be simpler; it will be less structured; it will be intercultural; it will be a work of collaboration across congregations; it will be leaderful; it will be marked by a contemplative way of being.

### Elizabeth Ann Vasquez, SSCJ - San Antonio, Texas

On a Lenten Sunday afternoon, women religious hold one another in a sacred space to listen to the heartbeat of one another. Why did we come? What impelled us to respond to an invitation to engage in “whispers of the Spirit” beckoning us to gently trust one another as we unmask fears and vulnerabilities to resuscitate our souls with the breath of wisdom and passion among sisters in our common call? In this contemplative stance we glean the Divine perspective to what is emerging for the future of religious life. Hearts become one in a transformative-paschal dance of surrendering to what is dying at the crossroads and heartaches of our realities.

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## Conversations on Religious Life for the Future

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We listen for the creative potential of collaborative melodies in discerning our emerging future. We risk asking the questions of this unfolding story of our lives. Together we carry our grief and embrace our poverty. In solidarity, our eyes focus toward the birthing of a new dawn for religious life -- on the edge, on the margins of humanity. Rooted in the mission of Jesus, we claim our prophetic role.



*A few of the 90 conversation participants*

## 2021 Named International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor

Child labor deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity.

It harms children mentally, physically, socially, and morally. It interferes with their schooling, preventing them from attending or concentrating. Sometimes children end up enslaved, separated from their families, and exposed to serious hazards and illnesses.

In the last decade child labor has decreased by 38% but, estimates are that 152 million children are still being exploited for their labor. Almost half of child labor occurs in Africa (72 million children), followed by Asia and the Pacific (62 million). Seventy percent of children in child labor work in agriculture, mainly in subsistence and commercial farming and herding livestock.

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening to reverse years of progress. For many children and their families, the pandemic has disrupted



education and caused loss of household income. If the world is to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere, citizens and governments must revitalize partnerships, increase awareness, and inspire legislative and practical actions to eliminate child labor. The [2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor](#) is a step in the right direction.

## Registration for the 2021 Virtual Ecumenical Advocacy Days Conference is Open

Registration for Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) has begun. Faith advocates will gather online April 18-21 to *Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored* and together reimagine a world that lives out the values of justice, equity, and the beloved community. A discount is available for registrations received before April 1. ([advocacydays.org/2021](http://advocacydays.org/2021))



Participants at #EAD2021 will examine how colonialism and slavery fostered systems that live on today as environmental racism and myriad other injustices. EAD is an opportunity to support the global movement for climate justice centered on and led by the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Organizers recently announced that the Most Reverend Bishop Michael Curry will preach at its ecumenical worship service on Sunday, April 18. Bishop Curry is the first African American to serve as presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church and a frequent speaker at churches, cathedrals, and conferences around the country and internationally. Throughout his ministry, he has been a strong advocate for social justice, reconciliation, and equality. The worship service will be shown twice on April 18 (10:00 AM and 1:00 PM (EDT)) for those who have registered for EAD and it will be available the week before on the EAD YouTube channel for congregations to use and share.



LCWR exercised its voice in the public square through the following actions:

- Letter to President Biden urging him to take every possible step to create a just and equitable policy toward the development, manufacture, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. LCWR (2/12/21)
- Letter to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to immediately end the harmful agreements made between the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and ICE Council 118 American Federation of Government Employees (ICE union) signed on January 19, 2021. LCWR (2/12/21)
- Letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas asking him to reject the use of expedited removal and immigration detention as it ends policies that effectively eliminated humanitarian protections at the border in violation of US law and treaty obligations. LCWR (2/13/21)
- Letter to President Biden commending his directive to review the impact of sanctions on the global pandemic response and humanitarian situations. LCWR (2/18/21)
- Amicus brief filed by faith-based organizations with the US Supreme Court in the case of Rranxburgaj v. DHS in support of Mr. Rranxburgaj's petition for review of a lower court's denial of his request for review of his stay of removal. LCWR (2/22/21)
- Letter to President Biden from fellow Catholics urging him to offer sanctions relief as a first step to bring Iran back to the negotiating table in order to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). (2/24/21)
- Letter to Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) expressing deep concern about the targeted detention and deportation of Black migrants, and the expulsions of Haitians at the border under policies carried over from the previous administration. LCWR (2/21/21)
- Endorsement of the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act of 2021 which calls for the suspension of US support for the Government of Honduras until endemic corruption, impunity, and human rights violations cease, and their perpetrators are brought to justice. LCWR (2/24/21)
- Endorsement of the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) which addresses the root cause of water shutoffs by helping communities across the country make necessary water and sewer improvements without perpetual rate increases. LCWR (2/24/21)
- Letter to Speaker Pelosi and majority Leader Schumer asking them to make critically needed improvements and prioritize the reintroduction and passage of the American Dream and Promise Act, legislation that would put immigrant youth and holders of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) on a pathway to citizenship. LCWR (2/24/21)
- Letter to members of the House of Representative urging immediate passage of the For the People Act (HR1). LCWR (2/26/21)
- Letter to President Biden expressing concern over the continued presence of troops and militarization of the border region and asking the administration to remove all military personnel and equipment from the border. LCWR (2/28/21)
- Letter to Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi urging them to protect the inclusion of the 2.2 million US citizen and lawfully present children in the COVID-19 recovery provisions budget reconciliation bill. LCWR (3/2/21)
- LCWR co-sponsored the We Are Home's March to Victory Town Hall event. LCWR (3/2/21)
- Quote for Faithful Democracy press release on passage of the For the Peoples Act (HR 1). Carol Zinn, SSJ (3/4/21)
- Letter to members of the Senate urging them to address the social inequities uncovered by COVID-19 by supporting provisions in the COVID-19 relief package recently passed by the House of Representatives that pave the way for states to expand Medicaid access. LCWR (3/2/21)
- Letter to President Biden from faith-based organizations commending his commitment to restoring the refugee resettlement program and urging him to

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## LCWR Sign-Ons and Letters

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immediately sign a revised FY21 Presidential Determination and restore regional allocations based on vulnerability and need. LCWR (3/18/21)

- Letter to President Biden and appropriate agency heads urging the administration to act swiftly to end new financing for all parts of the fossil fuel supply chain, stop new US fossil fuel support within 90 days across all government institutions, and work with other nations to end fossil fuel financing.
- Endorsement of Rep. Chuy Garcia's amendment to remove the secondary review process from the HR 6 the Dream and Promise Act. LCWR (3/10/21)
- Letter to Congress requesting funding for much needed programs to prevent and reduce violent conflict and build peace in the United States. LCWR (3/10/21)
- Letter to House Democratic Leadership urging them to move the NO BAN Act to a floor vote next week to avoid having to go through a mark-up process again. LCWR (3/10/21)

## Region 10 Offers a Series Exploring the 2019-22 Assembly Resolution

LCWR members and communicators of Region 10 have planned a year-long series of discussions focused on the intersection of racism, migration, and the climate crisis to highlight the [2019-22 LCWR assembly resolution](#).



The launch of the series, *Exploring Intersections: Catholic Sisters on Racism, Migration and Climate*, on March 10 coincided with Catholic Sisters Week. Charish Badzinski, writer, communication consultant, and public relations professional moderated a conversation among Beth Allen, director of affiliation for the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration; Ga'Nea Jones, a graduate of Marian Middle School in St. Louis and student at Missouri State University; and Joan Mitchell, CSJ, teacher, editor, and writer, which explored gender equity and its connections to race, migration, and climate change.

Over the course of the year, various panelists will engage in thoughtful exchanges about many of the most pressing social issues of the day. Episodes will air on the second Wednesday of the month at 4:00 PM (EDT) and include conversations about care of creation, migration, racial justice, ending human trafficking, eliminating gun violence, economic justice, food security, restorative justice, affordable housing, education for justice, equitable access to health care, and navigating the road ahead. Additional materials and registration information are available [here](#).

## LCWR Supports Immigration, Democracy and Racial Equity Legislation in 117th Congress

LCWR is urging passage of several consequential pieces of legislation that have been introduced in the 117th Congress. Those that pass the Democratic controlled House of Representatives are expected to face stiff headwinds in the closely divided Senate.



The [US Citizenship Act](#), (HR 1177/S 348) is a comprehensive immigration reform bill that would offer a pathway to citizenship for approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants with an expedited path for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients. The legislation also contains provisions to bolster family-based immigration, support asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations, and address the root causes of migration.

There are also a number of smaller immigration bills which offer needed improvements and a path to citizenship for various populations. The [Farm Workforce Modernization Act](#) (HR 1603) would provide permanent residency for undocumented farmworkers, and the [American Dream and Promise Act](#) (HR 6) would create a pathway to citizenship for DACA and TPS recipients. The Senate is currently considering the bipartisan [Dream Act](#) (S 264) which would provide DACA recipients and other Dreamers the opportunity to earn

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## LCWR Supports Immigration, Democracy and Racial Equity Legislation

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eventual citizenship and the [SECURE Act](#) (S 306) which would allow qualified TPS recipients to apply for legal permanent residency.

In addition, LCWR is supporting two bills which address conditions in Honduras that force people to migrate. [The Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act of 2021](#) (S 388) calls for the suspension of US support for the government of Honduras until endemic corruption, impunity, and human rights violations cease, and their perpetrators are brought to justice. [The Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act](#), which was recently introduced in the House, would suspend US funding for police and military operations, and prohibit international loans providing security assistance from being dispersed unless the Honduran government investigates and prosecutes blatant human rights violations by their police and military forces.

The 2020 election cycle pointed to the need for reform to protect many of the nation's democratic institutions. [The For the People Act](#) (HR 1/S 1) legislation is packed with reforms that would expand and protect voting rights; reduce the influence of money in politics; end gerrymandering; and hold elected officials to the highest ethical standards. The bill which passed the House on March 3 must now be taken up by the Senate.

[The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act](#) is another piece of reform legislation currently under consideration in Congress. It would restore the full protections of the original, bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was last reauthorized by Congress in 2006, and was gutted by the Supreme Court's Shelby County decision in 2013.

Finally, members of Congress have introduced a number of pieces of legislation designed to address the root causes of racial inequity including: the [United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Resolution](#) (S Con.Res. 6/H Con.Res. 19) which calls for the creation of a congressional commission to acknowledge and examine systemic racism that has impacted Black Americans throughout US history and the racial inequities that persist today. A second bill to

establish a [Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act](#) (HR 40/S 40) would examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies.

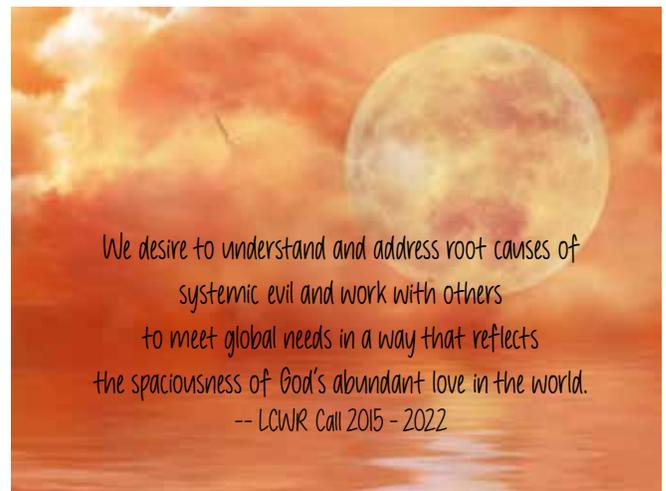
## News from the UN

### April 22—International Mother Earth Day

In 1972 the United Nations organized the first UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. It marked the beginning of a global awareness of the interdependence that exists among human beings, other living species, and the planet. In 2009, the UN General Assembly recognizing that Earth, and its ecosystems, is home to the global community and acknowledging that in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with Earth, designated April 22 International [Mother Earth Day](#).



The Catholic Climate Covenant has prepared resources to help people of faith explore this year's theme, *Restore Our Common Home*, by addressing the call to act not only to protect but restore God's gift of creation. The one-hour educational and prayer program offers a good way for families, parishes, schools, and religious communities to prepare for the Vatican's launch of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform in May 2021. The program contains prayers, readings, discussion questions, a short video, and suggested activities. Registration is available [here](#).



## Resource Center for Religious Institutes 2021 Conference

RCRI is planning for an in-person annual conference in Orlando, Florida, **October 26-29, 2021** at the Rosen Hotel -- not knowing yet what COVID restrictions may be in place. The theme for the program is **A New Way of Life...New Paths of Hope** taken from Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*. Pope Francis invites us to a renewed hope that "speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning."



The conference will highlight Helen Prejean, CSJ, director of Ministry Against the Death Penalty, as the keynote speaker. Presently two pre-conference workshops are scheduled along with 40 others, including three on eldercare sponsored by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO).



Further details and registration information will be available in May; meanwhile, leaders are encouraged to save the date.

### Upcoming Webinar: Child Safety and Protection

RCRI is sponsoring a one-hour webinar on April 23 at 2:00 PM (EDT) on "Child Safety and Protection Policies for Religious Institutes and Sponsored Ministries: Why You Need One and Best Practices for Creating or Revising Written Policies" with Michael A. Airdo of Kopon Airdo, LLC and Christopher J. Fusco of RCRI. The webinar will provide an overview of child protection policies and will delve into detail regarding: (1) why every religious institute needs to have written child protection policies; (2) how to begin the process of creating a policy; (3) considerations on what each policy should contain; (4) best practices for drafting a written policy; and (5) how to revise existing written policies to bring them into compliance with best practices and current standards. Registration will be available soon on the RCRI [website](#).



### Educational Debt Grant Application Deadline Approaching

The [National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations](#) (NFCRV) deadline to submit applications is April 12. Religious institutes may apply online for education grants for new entrants to religious life. Grants are available only to NRVC members and must be used for paying educational debt of a candidate to religious life. The NFCRV has provided 47 grants since it began in 2015. Additional information is available [here](#); or contact [Phil Loftus](#) at 312-318-0180.

### Summer Institute Information

NRVC will be hosting its annual [Summer Institute](#) workshops online July 12-28. Currently registration is available for the following workshops.

- July 12-16  
[Orientation Program for New Vocation Directors](#)
- July 19-21  
[Behavioral Assessment 1](#)
- July 23-24  
[Ethical Issues in Vocation and Formation Ministry](#)
- July 26-28  
[Is It Cultural, Generational, or Family of Origin? Issues in Candidate Assessment](#)

Our members' life and ministry are grounded  
in a contemplative stance that helps them face  
the significant shifts in demographics  
that hold substantial implications for them.  
-- LCWR Call 2015-2022



by Joan Mumaw, IHM  
 President  
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Solidarity with South Sudan is now in its 12th year of existence. We could never have dreamed all that has occurred during this time. We built two teacher training colleges, rehabilitated a two-story health training facility and developed training programs; we watched a garden grow from a community plot to more than 50 hectares (a unit of area equal to 10,000 square meters) with a training program in sustainable agriculture. More recently we have assumed responsibility for a conference and retreat center complete with programming and outreach to dioceses around the country. All of this is nothing but miraculous amid civil war, severe flooding, a plague of locusts, and economic collapse. It could not have been done without your support.

As we move from the development stage to consolidation, prior to eventual handing over to the local church, it is time to step back and reflect on the connections between how we live, how we work and what impact we are having on the local population. Jim Greene, MAfr, executive director of Solidarity with South Sudan, has written a reflection paper for the local Solidarity communities. With his permission, I share it with you as I think it has something to say to all of us in ministry. It is titled, "A Call to Recalibrate our Way of Living." His reflection may be found [here](#).

DePaul University, Chicago, is presenting a free conference on Global Health and Catholicism on April 16-18. I will be sharing Solidarity with South Sudan as a model of ministry linking the Global North and South. All are invited to register for any or all presentations of this online [webinar](#).

Here in the United States, we may be moving beyond the worst impact of the pandemic while all are watching carefully what is occurring on the African continent. Will there be a resurgence or is it true that there are mitigating factors which lower incidence of the coronavirus among this population? Stay tuned for updates to come. Again, thank you for your support of this mission begun and continued by religious from around the globe.

## Update from NRRO

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and the Avila Institute of Gerontology offered a webinar entitled *Developing a Resilient Lifestyle*. Presenter Dr. Francis Battisti shared habits and practices that can promote a resilient mindset. This recording may be accessed [here](#) and many others in the [webinar archives](#). These 60-minute webinars offer support and resources for leadership, healthcare personnel, caregivers, and seniors. Institutes are encouraged to explore a variety of age-related topics, including strategies for [navigating eldercare amid the coronavirus pandemic](#).

