

February 2021

LCWR and Other Faith Leaders Speak Out Against Assault on the Capitol



Women religious and faith leaders across the country vigorously condemned the violence visited upon the United States Capitol and members of Congress on January 6. LCWR issued a statement the next day denouncing the actions, expressing deep concern for the state of the nation and pledging to “take up the challenge to use our energy to repair our democracy and contribute to the work of building a more perfect union.” Religious congregations across the nation issued similar denunciations of the violence and the lies about the election that fed the insurrection. Many pointed to the racism and white nationalism that stoked the violence and the misuse of Christian symbols by some to justify their cause.

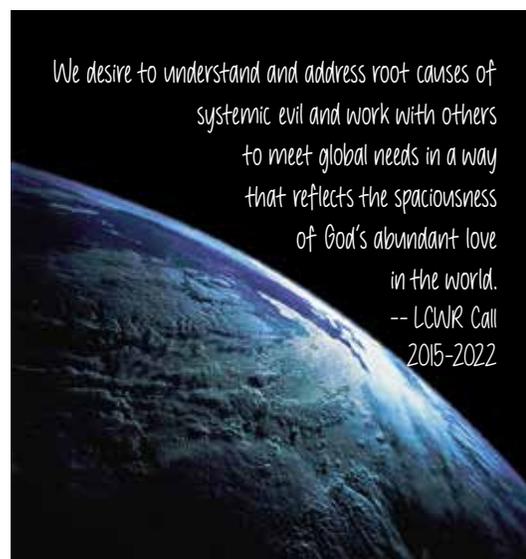
In addition, LCWR executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ joined 79 Christian faith leaders issuing a four-part appeal to people of faith: *Called to be Peacemakers*.

First, they called religious leaders across the country and across all traditions to condemn the violence of President Trump’s followers and the racism and nationalism that drove it.

Second, these faith leaders called for the immediate resignation or removal of Donald Trump from power believing the president is “fundamentally unfit for office and poses an immediate danger to our nation.”

Third, they called the nation to prayer and action. “We believe we are at a turning point in which Christians and people of faith and conscience from all political persuasions must unite in prayer and action to ensure a peaceful transfer of power and commit ourselves to the hard but essential work of repair, healing, racial justice, and reconciliation. This will require a great deal of truth-telling and shared determination to root out a politics fueled by fear, lies, bigotry, and conspiracy theories that undermine truth and the common good.”

Finally, they urged people of faith to dismantle the, “institutionalized racism that this COVID pandemic has again revealed, the needed racial reckoning that our criminal justice system has exposed, and the recent violent insurrection at the United States Capitol has made alarmingly clear.”



From the LCWR Executive Director

'There is Always Light'

by Elise D. García, OP — LCWR President

As our nation transitions to a new administration, with its breath of fresh air, and the COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, I am hanging on to Jeremiah's promise of a future full of hope.

Last week we had our annual congregational leadership retreat. Instead of gathering in a circle by the fireplace at a retreat center in the snow-covered woods of Michigan, we gathered in the Hollywood Squares of virtual Zoom conferencing, each leader in her own space in different parts of the country. This scene is all too familiar to us, as we circle round the clock to this time last year when we were just learning about a novel virus striking people in an unfamiliar and seemingly remote part of China.

Little did we know that within two months, the virus would steal through the pathways of our global interconnectedness and lockdown the world, utterly shifting our way of leading and being with one another.

At the time, our minds were focused on headlines of "impeachment" – only the third such time in our nation's history that the House of Representatives would act to remove a sitting US president. Then, two months into living in COVID-19 confinement, when many Americans were spending more time following news events than ever before, we witnessed – in the deliberate killing of George Floyd by a police officer – an emblematic image of the horror, virulence, and impunity of white supremacy that for so long has been tearing at the moral fabric of our nation and destroying Black lives. The stark awareness of living with not one but two deadly viruses became clear, unmasking the complicit ignorance among white people of the ever-present threat of violence and abasement that the virus of white supremacy holds over people of color.

Just weeks ago, another epic event gripped the nation when an assault on the US Capitol impelled terrified members of Congress and their staffs to run for shelter



and ended the lives of five people, causing countless more injuries. The insurrection against our democracy, led by white supremacists and anti-Semitic extremists, aimed to stop the lawful ratification of the results of the presidential election. It revealed, as Rev. Bryan Massingale wrote that day, "the clear declaration that many white people would rather live in a white dictatorship than in a multiracial democracy." The assault led to the second impeachment ever of a US president -- for inciting the insurrection.

These epochal events have challenged us all. As leaders of US congregations of women religious, we have done everything in our power to keep our sisters and co-workers safe against the coronavirus. We have guided our communities through episodes of COVID illness and death. We have taken on the role of liturgical leaders when our sacramental ministers have been unable to preside, holding spiritual communion with our members. We have carried on with the already-challenging work of leading our congregations through the seismic demographic changes of our times: safeguarding the legacy of ministries, stewarding the transfer of buildings and land, forging new collaborations with others for the sake of the mission, inviting new members, engaging in conversations about the emerging future of religious life. Many of us have extended our terms in office, as chapters are unable to take place due to the virus. We also have endured personal loss as team members, family, or dear friends have suffered illness or died, sharpening the heartache and weight of these times.

And we have been faithful to our values: issuing public statements, redoubling anti-racism work, acting to mitigate climate change, addressing dire economic and social needs, and otherwise engaging in these consequential times as religious leaders, responding to the moral exigencies of our day.

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There is Always Light

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This moment in history will long be remembered; the magnitude of its compounding challenges is breathtaking. We are the ones called to lead our congregations through it – and, somehow, to find ways to shine light on God’s abiding presence among us, and promise of new life.

As a new chapter in American history begins to be written, may the words of poet Amanda Gorman uplift us: “There is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to *be* it.”

February 5: Deadline for LCWR President and Board Nominations

LCWR is nearing the conclusion of the process of nominating members to serve in the LCWR presidency and on the national board. All members were asked to discern who they might nominate for these key roles in the life of the conference. Nominations by leadership teams or individuals must be submitted by **February 5**.

Important information on the LCWR nomination and election process was sent to all LCWR members in mid-December and is available on the members’ section of the LCWR [website](#) at “LCWR nomination and election process.” Included with the materials are an eligibility list, the responsibilities of the president and board members, and a prayer for discernment for use by leadership teams as they prepare to nominate members for these positions. The conference is dependent upon the members’ participation in the nomination process.

*We lead congregations faithful
to the call of the Gospel that attempt to bridge
the tradition which grounds us and
the future which calls us forward.*

-- LCWR Call 2015-2022

Save the Date for Two Events Both will be offered in English and Spanish

Registration information for both events
has been sent to LCWR members



CONSECRATED LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF FRATELLI TUTTI

PRAYER | PANEL | DISCUSSION

SAVE THE DATE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2
6:00-7:00PM CENTRAL
ONLINE

SPONSORED BY



LCWR Virtual Gatherings Accepting and Embracing Sexual Diversity

Presenter: Lynn M. Levo, CSJ

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Time: 1:30 - 3:00 PM ET

*The webinar will include breakout sessions where
template case studies will be discussed
in small groups*

Discerning Our Emerging Future

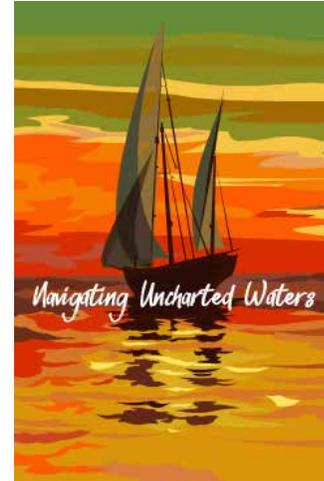
by Mary Hughes, OP

Throughout January, the Discernment Initiative Planning Group (DIPG) has been engaging in an analysis of all that has been shared on US religious life by LCWR members through their fall regional meetings and the November and December listening sessions, as well as through the listening sessions held with facilitators, consultants, and vicars for religious. In addition, the group is studying the feedback from leaders whose congregations engaged in conversations centered on the data shared at the 2020 LCWR assembly.

Multiple themes as well as seeds of new life are evident in the feedback. For one of the planning group sessions a graphic recorder will work to capture the spirit of the conversations in a manner that words may not express. The group is taking careful note of the many suggestions that have been made for the ways LCWR might more effectively support leaders.

LCWR also extended an invitation to former LCWR members to serve as conversation partners who would be available to a community leadership team or to leaders working collaboratively across congregations on discerning how they may best plan for the future. Thirty-one women religious generously agreed to be part of this pilot venture. Orientation sessions will be held at the end of January for the conversation partners to explore the scope of the accompaniment in this initiative. At the end of the orientation, these former leaders will be missioned in service of the LCWR membership.

An application to request the service of a conversation partner will be forthcoming in an email requesting information concerning a group's specific needs for assistance, such as team building, decision-making, administrative questions, and more. The DIPG will work to match a leadership team's need with the expertise and experience of a conversation partner.



Order the 2021 LCWR Reflection Book

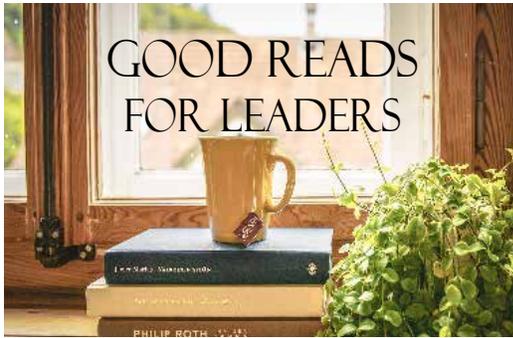
The 2021 LCWR reflection book, [Navigating Uncharted Waters](#), features the insights of 40 LCWR members who explore the call to live effectively in the world today when so little in life is clear, simple, or risk-free. Their writing will be accompanied by artwork by women religious as well as questions and suggestions for deepening the reader's own prayer.

The cost of each book is \$6.00, plus shipping and handling. 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](#) and are due by **February 16.**

New List of Facilitators Available

LCWR has made available to its members a list of facilitators who work with institutes of women religious. Names on the list were all recommended by at least one member of LCWR.

Recently, LCWR asked members to review the list and submit additional names. A revised listing that also includes information about the facilitators areas of expertise will soon be made available on the private side of the LCWR website. Members are encouraged to use the list when searching for a facilitator for chapters, assemblies, special events and projects, and more.



Is This All There Is? On Resurrection and Eternal Life

by Gerhard Lohfink, translated by Linda M. Maloney

Recommended by Catherine Patten, RSHM

The title question of Gerhard Lohfink's recent book, *Is This All There Is?* has felt personal and existential as I/we navigate our aging and growing awareness that death may not be far off. Coping with the pandemic only heightened that sense. Lohfink, a distinguished German biblical scholar, has lived and worked since 1986 as a theologian for a lay community in Germany. Perhaps that accounts for his pastoral approach and accessible style. His reflections on what it really is that we hope for are imaginative, new, and inspiring.

After surveying "What People Think" about life after death and "What Israel Learned," he asks, "What Entered the World in Jesus?" His theology is this-worldly, resolutely incarnational. "...the resurrection of the dead is not a natural event; it is God's pure gift. But the unceasing creation of the world is in itself utterly gratuitous on the part of God, the act of God's creative love. Once we have understood that 'creation of the world' and 'new creation of the world in resurrection' come together" (p.125).

With this foundation, Lohfink moves to the existential question, "What Will Happen to Us?" For me, this part was gripping. With imagination and creativity, Lohfink brings his knowledge of scripture and tradition to the questions raised by contemporary science and cosmology. How does our personal history relate to our connectedness to all of creation? And how does this relate to our hope for a completely timeless "eternal life"? He believes that the experience of adoration even now offers clues. The final sentence sums up his conclusion—eternity does not "withdraw from the world but opens to it utterly" (p. 258). Isn't that worth hoping for?

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

At this time, all LCWR activities will take place virtually through the end of May 2021.

Upcoming LCWR Dates

**Co-Sponsored Virtual Event:
Consecrated Life
Through the Lens of Fratelli Tutti**
February 2, 2021
7:00 - 8:00 PM ET

**LCWR Webinar:
Accepting and Embracing Sexual Diversity**
February 18, 2021
1:30 - 3:00 PM ET

LCWR Assembly
Orlando, Florida
August 10 - 13, 2021

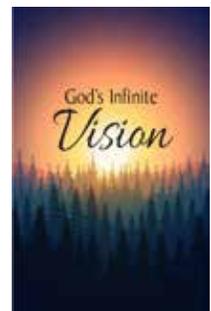
Leading from Within Retreat
Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona
January 16 - 21, 2022

LCWR New Leaders Workshop
Location to be determined
March 31 - April 3, 2022

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

Extra Copies of Occasional Papers Available

Copies are in the mail of the Winter 2021 issue of LCWR's journal, *Occasional Papers*, entitled **God's Infinite Vision**. Some extra copies are available for [purchase online](#).





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

- Letter to President-Elect Joe Biden and DHS Secretary Nominee Alejandro Mayorkas requesting that Mexico be designated for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a result of COVID-19. LCWR (12/16/20)
- Statement of the Washington Interfaith Staff Community Energy and Ecology Working Group’s administrative and legislative recommendations for a faithful environmental agenda. LCWR (12/18/20)
- Letter from faith leaders to members of Congress calling for a smooth, fair, and legal certification of the 2020 US presidential election results on January 6, 2021. Ann Scholz, SSND (12/31/20)
- Letter to Congress and the Biden administration urging them to protect the Arctic Refuge from drilling. Ann Scholz, SSND (1/4/21)
- Letter to members of Congress urging them to support H.R. 1, the *For the People Act*, to help put the people back in charge of our democracy. LCWR 1/4/21)
- LCWR statement to members of Congress in support of the *For the People Act*. LCWR (1/7/21)
- LCWR statement condemning the violence and rioting at the Capitol. LCWR (1/7/2021)
- Letter to the Biden–Harris administration urging them to use executive authority to enact a nationwide utilities shutoff moratorium on day one of their administration. LCWR (1/8/21)
- National Faith Leaders’ letter condemning the violence of Trump’s followers and the sinful racism and nationalism that gave rise to it; calling for the immediate resignation or removal of Donald Trump from power; calling the nation to prayer in these dangerous days. Carol Zinn, SSJ (1/8/21)
- Letter to President Elect-Biden urging him to support reasonable, temporary expansions to both the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) Ann Scholz, SSND (1/10/21)
- Petition to President-Elect Biden urging him to prioritize the abolition of capital punishment and immediately suspending all federal executions. Ann Scholz, SSND (1/11/21)
- Letter to President-Elect Biden urging his administration to work with Congress and international allies to support the issuance of 2 trillion Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to help with the global recovery from the pandemic. LCWR (1/12/21)
- Letter to President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris asking for an immediate grant of relief from deportation for all people claiming sanctuary. Ann Scholz, SSND (1/12/21)
- Letter to President-Elect Biden regarding the urgent need to shift US policy in Central America to prioritize the needs of working-class families, environmental protection, human rights, and democracy. LCWR (1/14/21)
- Letter to Senate Majority Leader Schumer urging him to join House Speaker Pelosi in prioritizing the re-introduction and passage of the *For the People Act* as a first priority of the new Democratic majority. LCWR (1/13/21)
- Letter to President-Elect Joe Biden and US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas requesting their administration issue designations of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to undocumented immigrants from Mexico. LCWR (1/15/21)
- Letter to incoming Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi urging them to use all necessary legislative tools to pass a comprehensive national relief and recovery package that includes permanent protection and a path to citizenship for undocumented essential workers and their families, Dreamers, and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders. LCWR (1/15/21)
- Letter to President-Elect Biden calling on the new administration to immediately pledge and support appropriation of at least \$8 billion to the Green Climate Fund and to provide \$400 million over four years to the Adaptation Fund. LCWR (1/15/21)
- Letter calling on Congress to include permanent protections and a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have long contributed to this country, particularly Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and those essential workers who have been on the frontlines during this pandemic and their families. LCWR (1/15/21)

Coronavirus Relief Package is Signed into Law

On December 27, President Trump signed into law a \$900 billion coronavirus relief package to protect the lives and livelihoods of the American people. The bill includes provisions that meet many, although not all, of the nation's immediate needs for relief and includes some limited recovery provisions. While this is a good first step, many believe that additional legislation will be required to address the continuing needs of the American people for relief and long-term recovery.

The bill's many provisions include:

- Billions in urgently needed funds to accelerate the free and equitable distribution of safe vaccines
- A six-month boost to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Emergency rental assistance
- Improved access to tax credits for people who lost income in 2020
- Another round of stimulus checks, this time available to families of mixed immigration status who will also be retroactively eligible for the checks issued under the CARES Act
- A \$300 per week unemployment insurance enhancement for Americans out of work
- Funding for colleges, schools, and childcare assistance
- Funding and policy changes to help small businesses, including minority-owned businesses, and nonprofits recover from the pandemic

The bill also includes provisions that go beyond immediate relief including aid to the international vaccine alliance, clean energy reforms, funding to create good-paying jobs improving vital water infrastructure, and targeted money for state and local governments.

Celebrate the Feast by Working to End Human Trafficking

February 8 is the [Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita](#), who was enslaved and received her freedom with the support of the [Cannossian Sisters](#). The Catholic Church has designated her feast day the [World Day of Prayer, Reflection, and Action against Human Trafficking](#).



A number of Catholic organizations are planning events to commemorate the feast of this woman who resisted her own enslavement, to raise awareness, and to encourage prompt action to end the modern-day slavery of human trafficking.

[US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking](#) (USCSAHT) and other [Talitha Kum](#) networks around the world are planning a prayer marathon on the feast of the patron saint of victims of trafficking. They are offering a [prayer service](#) for use with local communities, parishes, schools, and universities as well as a 15-minute prayer service in English and Spanish USCSAHT's [YouTube](#) channel.

USCCB's [Coalition of Catholic Organizations against Human Trafficking](#) (CCOAH), of which LCWR is a member, has prepared a [resource kit](#) to help celebrate the feast by combatting human trafficking. In addition, CCOAH's partner, the John J. Brunetti Human Trafficking Academy at St. Thomas University, is collaborating with the University of Miami Health Systems Thrive Clinic to offer a webinar on victim centered approaches to health care for survivors of human trafficking January 25. Registration is open to all. Additional information and registration may be found [here](#).

Fourth Biennial Convocation for Justice Promoters Planned for February and March

The steering committee of JCWR, a network of justice promoters of women's congregations, invites all those who serve as justice promoters for congregations of women religious to its 4th biennial convocation, entitled *Justice in a World in Transition: Revolutionary Love at the Intersection of Racism, Migration and Climate Crisis*.



The virtual event will kick off **February 2** with an address by Valarie Kaur, an American activist, documentary filmmaker, lawyer, educator, faith leader, and founder of the [Revolutionary Love Project](#).

The first event will be followed by sessions on February 25, March 11, and March 25 featuring speakers and providing the opportunity for justice promoters to share ideas and discuss further collaboration. Each of the 90 minute sessions will focus on one of the three intersecting justice concerns outlined in the [2019-2022 LCWR Assembly Resolution](#). Additional information and registration are available [here](#).

2021 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering is Going Virtual

Catholic social ministry leaders from across



the country are invited to gather virtually February 6-9 to learn, pray, and advocate for justice. This year's gathering, *Make Justice Your Aim: Rebuilding Together*, will explore the disparities revealed by COVID-19 and new models of justice and solidarity.

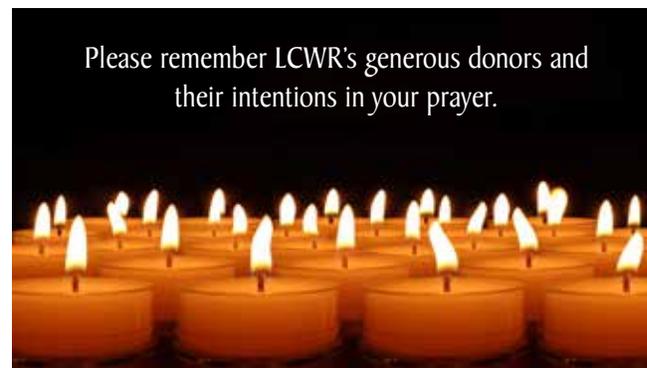
For more than 30 years, the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (CSMG) has served as the major annual gathering organized by the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development in collaboration with 10 other USCCB departments and 18 national Catholic organizations. This central gathering of Catholic social ministry leaders usually draws more than 500 participants whose faith inspires them to respond to pressing current domestic and global challenges.

This year's virtual gathering will include inspiring leading voices in church and society, workshops with policy experts and grassroots community leaders, intentional opportunities for best practice-sharing among participants, resources from dozens of Catholic social ministry organizations, and virtual advocacy visits with elected officials. The cost for this four-day event is \$50.



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Educational Debt Grant Application Open

The [National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations \(NFCRV\)](#) is pleased to announce that from January 4 - April 12 communities 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](#) (312-318-0180).

Summer Institute Information

Building upon the success of the 2020 Summer Institute and the unpredictability of this global pandemic, all workshops will be offered using the zoom platform. The NRVC will be hosting its annual [Summer Institute](#) workshops online July 12-28. The following are the workshop titles and dates; registration will be open in February.

- 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](#)

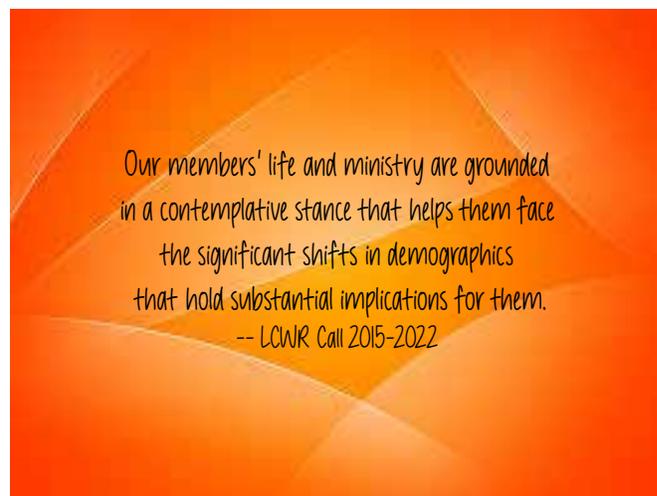
Update from NRRO

Recently, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) mailed [Direct Care Assistance](#) information to all religious institutes registered in the NRRO database. This application is the gateway to NRRO funding and consultative services. All institutes are urged to complete the form, even if not applying or eligible for financial assistance. The data provided enables the NRRO to develop a more complete assessment of retirement funding and needs nationally. This information also facilitates the NRRO's collaboration with other national organizations that support religious life, including LCWR.



Questions about Direct Care Assistance may be directed to NRRO Grants Specialist [Monica Glover](#) (202-541-3216).

On February 9, the NRRO and the Avila Institute of Gerontology will present a free webinar, *Developing a Resilient Lifestyle*. Presenter Dr. Francis Battisti will share strategies for creating practices that promote a resilient mindset. More information and registration materials may be found [here](#).





by Joan Mumaw, IHM
 President
jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com

Friends in Solidarity is pleased that, in spite of the pandemic, we received 15% more donations from donors and supporters in 2020 than in 2019 and were able to contribute nearly \$425,000 in support for projects of Solidarity with South Sudan. More than 50% came from women religious! This support included salary support for tutors and staff at the Solidarity Teacher Training College, Catholic Health Training Institute, and the Good Shepherd Peace Center during the shutdown occasioned by the pandemic. Women religious have assisted Solidarity to be the “Payment Protection Plan” for our loyal, South Sudanese staff who, otherwise, would be among those facing severe food insecurity.

A new Solidarity Pastoral Team of four men and women religious assumed management of The Good Shepherd Peace Center in May and resumed programs in August with a fully booked schedule of retreats, clergy renewal programs, and catechist training, all while observing pandemic protocols.

The Solidarity Teacher Training College conducted a training program for teachers on the implementation of the new outcomes-based curriculum rolled out by the government at the beginning of 2020. These teachers, in turn, are training other teachers for when the schools re-open in April.

The Catholic Health Training Institute resumed classes, training nurses and midwives in early October. Some of the women students are delayed in returning due to pregnancy and the birth of children during the shutdown. Solidarity tutors and administrators are urgently sought for the CHTI.

The informal camp for displaced persons at the parish in Riimenze was dismantled during 2020. Due to the

ceasefire, people have returned to their plots of land to plant, harvest, and rebuild their homes. Solidarity was a major support to nearly 7000 persons who fled ethnic fighting on January 1, 2017. US women religious were instrumental in making sure there was water and humanitarian assistance available for the displaced persons during this unfortunate event.

We are grateful to all who supported our efforts in 2020 with donations, personnel, and prayers. We look forward to your continued support in this new year with all its challenges. Please continue to pray for peace in South Sudan as those in leadership haltingly implement the peace plan and prepare for elections.

News from the UN

February 6—International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM

Ending the practice of female genital mutilation would have profoundly positive effects across societies allowing girls and women to reclaim their health, human rights, and vast potential. The UN, and NGOs affiliated with the UN, have learned important lessons about what can be done to end this practice which reflects deep-rooted inequality and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls.



February 20—World Day of Social Justice

The UN recognizes that social justice is essential for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of its global mission to promote development and human dignity. Social justice lies at the heart of the work of the UN and includes promoting gender equality and the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants, and removing barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or disability.