

April 2019

## LCWR Planning Process Bridges Religious Life Past to the Emerging Future

**A**s a continuation of LCWR's emergent planning process, the members of the LCWR national board and staff joined the planning process design team as well as 15 guests representing many of the organizations serving religious life for a day-and-a-half charrette. This design and planning experience generated important ideas for how best to support religious life and what LCWR's role might be as religious life experiences significant shifts and changes.

The design team (Donna Fyffe, facilitator; Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ; Rosalia Meza, VDMF; Mary Jo Nelson, OLVN; Michelle Marie Stachowiak, CSSF; and Carol Zinn, SSJ; as well as Judith Donovan, CSJ, who was not able to be present for the charrette) had gathered input from 32 focus groups that they led during December and January. The focus groups, which involved approximately 150 people, generated information that provided a deeper understanding into what is occurring in US religious life today, and ideas about how LCWR might re-invent itself to respond to the changes.

It is predicted that the most radical changes will occur in US religious life in the next five to 10 years as significant demographic shifts take place. Some of the statistics from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) shared during the charrette included the following:

- 80% of finally professed women religious today in the US are 70 years of age or older. 45% are 80 years or older.
- While there are approximately 45,000 women religious in the US today, by 2024, it is predicted that there will be 23,000. Of the 23,000, 16,100 will be 70 years of age and older, while 6900 will be under 70.

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*The 15 guests representing organizations serving religious life interact with members of the LCWR emergent planning process design team, board, and staff during a recent charrette.*

2019 LCWR Assembly  
Imagining Leadership  
in a Global Community  
August 13 – 16, 2019  
Scottsdale, Arizona

Registration materials will be sent to all  
members and associates soon

*From the LCWR Presidency*

## Enabling the Flourishing of Interculturality

Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ — LCWR President-Elect

I'm starting where I left off from my musings about the InterAmerican Conference meeting held this past February in Chiapas, Mexico (see page 4). Being immersed in this part of Mexico, with many different indigenous peoples, I found myself reflecting on the congregations that comprise LCWR. How might we learn from the practice of "nurturing resistance" that young José, a seminarian in the diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, spoke so passionately about to those of us gathered at this conference?



As I walked, listened, and took in all that I was learning while at this museum and in conversations with the men and women religious attending the InterAmerican conference, I asked myself how this experience might influence my own leadership.

My reflection led to the growing intercultural diversity within my own congregation and within LCWR itself. At the same time, the consistent headlines in the news on racism, misogyny, political polarization, the #me-too movement, ecological

During our visit to San Cristóbal, we were able to visit Jtatic Samuel Museum. This museum honors the memory of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz García, the last Bishop of Chiapas and the first Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. This beloved Jtatic (little Father) "incarnated and lived radically the Gospel," inviting all to walk the path of solidarity, macro-ecumenism, promotion, and defense of human rights.



injustices, migration and refugee crisis, political corruption, and so many other ills of life swirled in my mind.

When I quiet all this noise, what I hear and experience is a deep desire to walk the path of intercultural living more intentionally and gently. Within my own congregation, 80% of the sisters 60 years and younger are other than Anglo. We are blessed with women from the cultural roots of Vietnam,

As I walked through the museum, getting wonderful background information about Mexico's history from Teresa Maya, CCVI, I was struck by how beloved Jtatic Samuel was to the people he served. Soon after his ordination he became an advocate of the indigenous peoples of his diocese, encouraging their particular cultural expressions of faith through song, dance, and ritual. He invited and educated both lay men and women to participate in their parishes as Eucharistic ministers, catechists, and lectors. His way of leadership was one of invitation and empowerment of the people of God. After hundreds of years of persecution and suppression of the various cultures of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, Jtatic Samuel paved the way for the rich expression of their faith to once again flourish in this beautiful part of Mexico.

Mexico, China, Philippines, Korea, and Taiwan. They have entered a predominantly Anglo congregation and in so doing are quietly and gently changing our congregation. While our welcome and intentions are well-meaning, are they enough? What more might we do to enable the expression of their culture and faith to evolve our congregational culture into something even more vibrant and inclusive?

I then reflect on LCWR. Can we continue to stretch our own thinking about cultural influences and expressions? Will we enable our current ways of being, thinking, doing, and praying evolve as the face of LCWR evolves? I believe we will because our historical

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## LCWR Planning Process Bridges Religious Life Past to the Emerging Future

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- 300 of the 420 institutes of religious life in the United States will move to completion in the next several decades.

The design team's charter is to do the following: "To generate a national conversation on the future of religious life, to uncover how LCWR might best serve its members, to explore diverse ways for LCWR to position itself in calling forth other organizations and invested groups serving women religious to grapple with the reality facing women religious, explore together pivotal questions facing religious, and to identify needed pathways to set a visionary direction."

The 15 guests who joined LCWR for the charrette, held on February 18 and 19 at Bon Secours Retreat Center in Marriottsville, Maryland were: Deborah Borneman, SSCM (National Religious Vocations Conference); Adriana Cazada, CCVI (Giving Voice); Mary Christine Cremin, RSM (Conference of Major Superiors of Women Religious); Inma Cuesta, CMS (Association of Latin American Missionary Sisters - AHLMA); Ellen Dauwer, SC (Religious Formation Conference); Desiré Anne-Marie Findlay, CSSF (Giving Voice); Roberta Fulton, SSMN (National Black Sisters Conference); Thomas Gaunt, SJ (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate); Gilmary Kay, RSM (Archdiocese of Washington, DC); Maryann Lopiccio, SC (Conference of Vicars of Consecrated Life); Kathleen Mahoney (GHR Foundation); Nick Schafer (Communicators for Women Religious); Cecilia Sierra, CMS (AHLMA); John Skrodinsky, ST (Religious Brothers Conference); and Vicki Woullé, CSA (Leadership Collaborative).

While information from all the focus groups was shared at the charrette, the design team gave particular attention to the ideas coming forth from non-dominant ethnic religious and from younger religious.

As a continuation of this process, all LCWR member have been asked to consider several questions developed as a result of the conversation at the charrette. These questions are also being considered at the spring regional meetings. Further work with the emerging ideas will take place at the LCWR assembly in August.



▲ Rosalia Meza, VDMF and Michelle Marie Stachowiak, CSSF present insights about younger women religious and those of non-dominant ethnicities.



▲ Charrette guests Nick Schafer and Desiré Findlay, CSSF share ideas about the future of religious life.

► Vicki Woullé, CSA shares wisdom from her table conversation during the charrette.



## Enabling the Flourishing of Interculturality

*(continued from page 1)*

footprint reminds us that we are women of bold faith, foresight, and flexibility. We embrace change and work with our resistance. I pray we continue to move into the future with an even fuller expression of our vocation through the rich diversity found among us. Like Jtatic Samuel, may we use our leadership to enable interculturality to flourish among us.

*A report on the InterAmerican meeting can be found on page 4.*

## LCWR Participates in InterAmerican Gathering in Mexico

by Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ - LCWR President-Elect

After a long day of travel, four other LCWR board members and I arrived in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico for a two-and-a-half-day meeting. Those of us representing LCWR (Sharlet Wagner, CSC; Teresa Maya, CCVI; Theresa Sandok, OSM; Kate Katoski, OSF; and I) joined the other attendees from the Religious Conference of Mexico (CIRM), Guatemala, the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC), and the US Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM).

After a good night's sleep, we began our InterAmerican conference meeting with a beautiful prayer ritual led by several local indigenous men and women.



They explained their deep connection with the four elements of wind, water, fire, and earth and how their spirituality and faith are intertwined and deeply connected to their ancestral heritage. Each of us was invited to light candles in the areas of the two elements that spoke most strongly to us in that moment.



The remainder of our first day was spent listening to men and women from this region of Chiapas, including a young seminarian named José. What touched me the most from his sharing was how he practices “nurturing resistance” within himself. I asked what he meant by this and he commented that he resists any aspects of practicing his faith that subtly or overtly suppress or mute the expressions of faith by the indigenous people. For too many years, the indigenous people were forced to forgo their customs, practices, and ways

of living and being. Listening to José and experiencing his passion for God, Earth, and all peoples, moved me deeply. The words “practicing nurturing resistance” continue to linger within me.

In the afternoon of that first day, we continued to spend time reflecting together on the experience



of the indigenous people of the region. We bridged this reflection with the current immigration and refugee movement operative in Guatemala, Mexico, United States, and Canada. We listened to one another and allowed ourselves to be influenced by what we were experiencing among us. We ended our first full day together with liturgy, celebrated by Bishop Rodrigo Aguilar Martínez of San Cristóbal; John Pavlik, OFMCap (representing CMSM); and Timothy Scott, CSB (CRC executive director).

The next morning we began with a reflective prayer on Pope Francis' plea for all of God's people to embrace, protect, promote, and integrate refugees and migrants. We named for one another the ways congregations and others are helping to embrace, protect, promote, and integrate immigrants and refugees in our respective countries.

Following this reflection, we visited a local refugee center run by the diocese of San Cristóbal. We learned of the atrocities facing those who are a part of the migration that is happening in this region of Mexico. The stories we heard were heart-wrenching and fueled the continued desire to respond to this humanitarian crisis occurring around the world.

As our time together came to a close, I reflected on how much had transpired in just two short days together. I left Chiapas with seeds planted in my heart to reflect more deeply on how we, as women religious in the United States, can learn from the stories of nonviolent resistance to forced cultural suppression of language, arts, and the ancestral heritage of the women in our own congregations. For further reflection, please see my comments in the “President's Column” in this issue of the LCWR newsletter and please visit the [LCWR website](#) to see more photos of our experience.

## LCWR Retreat: Saying Yes to the Activity of God

February 10-15 saw 31 LCWR members from 15 different congregations and several countries of origin gather at the Bethany Center retreat house in Lutz, Florida for the annual Leading From Within Retreat. Of special note this year was the participation of a married lay woman who, as a non-canonical member of the Spiritan Provincial Council located in Bethel Park, PA, is also an associate member of LCWR.

The week, which was facilitated by Janet Mock, CSJ; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; and Marie McCarthy, SP, was blessed with balmy, sunny weather, and numerous sightings of a variety of wildlife. Participants gathered each morning for prayer, ritual, and input and again each evening to gather the fruits of the day in ritual and prayer. The days were steeped in silence and a tangible openness of heart and spirit.

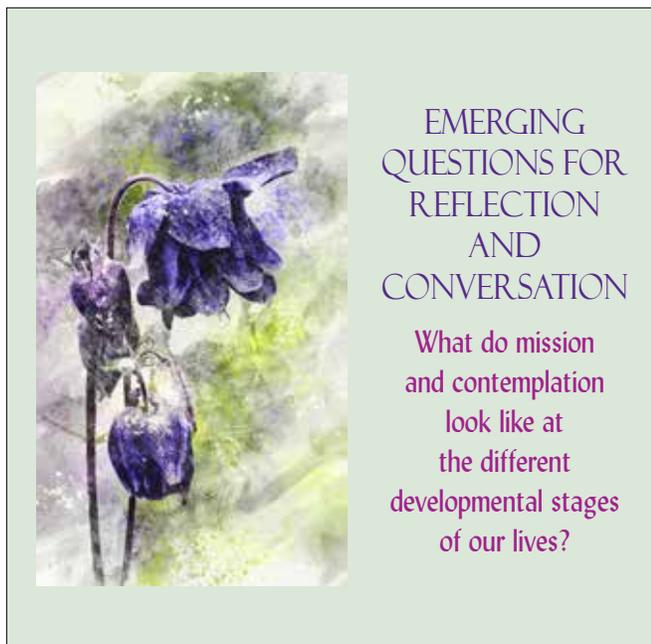
Participants left filled with gratitude for this time apart which allowed them to say a renewed "Yes" to the activity of God in their lives and in their congregations and reminded them that they are enough and that they have enough for the journey ahead.



## Practicing Leadership Workshop Makes Debut

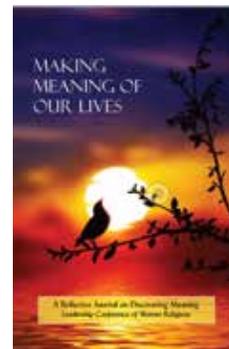
The workshop, “Practicing Leadership: How to Embrace a Vital and Vibrant Future,” was offered for the first time on March 4 – 6 at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Marriottsville, Maryland. Forty-eight LCWR members from 21 congregations participated in this event. The workshop, which was facilitated by Carol Zinn, SSJ, and Marie McCarthy, SP, was designed for members who have been serving in elected leadership for at least two years to assist them in making the connections between the big picture, vision, and story that holds religious life and the daily realities they face as leaders. It was designed to respond to the request of members for practical assistance in carrying out the work of leadership. In addition to input from the facilitators and viewing several short videos, there was lively table and group conversation which spilled over into break and meal times. Participants found the workshop both encouraging and helpful and expressed the desire that it be at least a day longer if not two days longer. In particular they valued making connections with and spending time in conversation with other leaders facing similar challenges.

This workshop will be offered again from September 17-19 at the Carmelite Spirituality Center in Darien, Illinois.



## Extra Copies of LCWR Reflection Book Available

Orders for LCWR’s 2019 reflection book, *Making Meaning of Our Lives*, are in the mail. A few copies of the book are still available and may be [ordered online](#). The cost of each book is \$6.00, plus shipping and handling. Revenue from this LCWR project helps defray the costs of the resources and programs the conference provides its members. Questions about orders may be directed to LCWR’s administrative assistant, Carol Glidden, at [cglidden@lcsr.org](mailto:cglidden@lcsr.org).



## A Reminder About the 2020 LCWR Leadership Award

On March 12, 2019 an invitation was sent to all LCWR members to raise names of religious women leaders for the 2020 Outstanding Leadership Award. [A form may be downloaded](#) from the LCWR website to submit names. The form is located at the top of the list of private attachments. *(Members must be signed in to this section of the website)*. Forms need to be returned to Christine Beckett, SCN at [cbeckett@lcsr.org](mailto:cbeckett@lcsr.org) by April 26, 2019.

## LCWR Officers Travel to Rome

From March 25 - 30, the LCWR presidency (Sharlet Wagner, CSC; Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ; and Teresa Maya, CCVI) and executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ will be in Rome for their annual visits to various Vatican offices. Some of their visits will be made jointly with the officers of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. Also included in the agenda will be a meeting at the offices of the International Union of Superiors General which will also include an opportunity to meet with women religious leaders stationed in Rome.

## Cardinal Joseph Tobin Blesses New Offices in Silver Spring

On March 11 Cardinal Joseph Tobin, CSSR celebrated a Eucharistic liturgy at the suite of new offices of LCWR, the Resource Center for Religious Institutes, and Friends in Solidarity.

After the liturgy, Cardinal Tobin blessed each office and meeting space in the suite, and then stayed for a reception.



*Cardinal Tobin and RCRI executive director Sharon Euart, RSM*

## LCWR Welcomes New Staff Member

Aisha White began her employment on February 19 as an administrative assistant for LCWR.



She says, “I have been working in an office environment for over 20 years. I am glad my career path has led me to LCWR. Work with a cause is very important to me and LCWR supports various great causes. As the mother of a child on the autism spectrum, advocacy in general is a big part of my life.

“I enjoy cooking, reading, spending time with my son, and volunteering, as well as staying up to date with the latest trends in web development and graphic design.”

LCWR welcomes Aisha to its staff. She may be reached at 301-588-4955 and at [awhite@lcwr.org](mailto:awhite@lcwr.org).

## LCWR Seeks Data About Response of Women Religious to US Border Crisis

Women religious continue to make a very generous response to the needs of those fleeing their homelands and arriving at the US southern border. LCWR is trying to track how many US women religious have been able to volunteer at the border in recent months as well as how much women religious have contributed financially to this humanitarian crisis. This data demonstrates the mobilizing capacity of Catholic sisters and what can be accomplished as women religious network with other organizations addressing needs. To date, the data shows:

- **Number of women religious volunteers: 162**
- **Total financial contributions from women religious: \$291,200**

Any congregation that has not submitted information to LCWR is asked to send that information to Janette Cahill ([jcahill@lcwr.org](mailto:jcahill@lcwr.org)).

## Upcoming LCWR Dates

### LCWR New Leader Workshop

Conference Center  
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois  
April 4 — 7, 2019

### LCWR Assembly

Scottsdale, Arizona  
August 13 — 17, 2019

### LCWR Practicing Leadership: How to Embrace a Vital and Vibrant Future Workshop

Carmelite Spiritual Center | Darien, Illinois  
September 17 — 19, 2019

### Leading from Within Retreat

Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona  
January 12 – 17, 2020

### LCWR New Leader Workshop

Conference Center  
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois  
March 26 — 29, 2020

### Imagining Justice

Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center  
Marriottsville, MD  
April 20 – 23, 2020

### LCWR Assembly

Dallas, Texas  
August 11 — 15, 2020

### Leading from Within Retreat

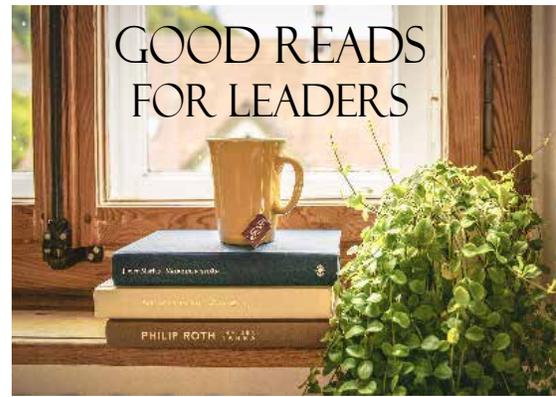
San Pedro Retreat Center  
Winter Park, Florida  
January 10 – 15, 2021

### LCWR Assembly

Orlando, Florida  
August 10 — 13, 2021

### LCWR Assembly

St. Louis, Missouri  
August 9 — 12, 2022



### On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old

By Parker J. Palmer

#### Recommended by Lorelle Elcock, OP

This latest offering (2018) from Parker Palmer, Quaker teacher, spiritual mentor, and activist, gives us his meditation on aging and invites readers to listen to their own experience. As he has done in earlier writings, he tells rich stories from his own life, including times of darkness and depression as well as times of joy and satisfaction, and reflects on the meaning in these experiences. Palmer looks at aging from a variety of perspectives as he approaches 80 and draws from the wisdom of such figures as Gandhi and Merton, the poetry of Rilke and Rumi, as well as stories from the lives of friends and colleagues. He cherishes the role of mentor to younger generations and appreciates what he learns from them. A surprise was his mutually-enriching collaboration with singer, songwriter, poet, and activist Carrie Newcomer. They have a joint website with offerings of retreats, podcasts, and other events as well as three songs inspired by this book that can be downloaded free of charge ([www.NewcomerPalmer.com](http://www.NewcomerPalmer.com)).

As leaders, we have been challenged by LCWR past president Teresa Maya, CCVI to focus on meaning-making and to share the rich story of the meaning of our lives as women religious with a world desperately in need of role models. I appreciated how this slim volume gives a warm, human testimony to the gift of aging by one who has reflected deeply on the meaning of his own life's calling and the importance of staying engaged with the world and with our souls.

## Advocates from Across the Country Gather in El Paso

Immigrant advocates, faith leaders, and members of border communities gathered in El Paso February 25-27 for the 2019 Hope Border Summit. The gathering, hosted by Bishop Mark Seitz and the Hope Border Institute, sought to advance a border driven narrative around migration and border militarization in the current political environment; identify common research needs and joint advocacy opportunities; and deepen relationships among organizers, faith leaders, and advocates.



*Jean Stokan; Rosemary Welsh, RSM; Ann Scholz, SSND; and Norma Pimentel, MJ at the border*

The El Paso area is where two children died in US custody, one in late December and another in early January. The stories of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal and 8-year-old Felipe Gomez Alonzo, both from Guatemala, served as a touch-stone for the group throughout the meeting. “While we discussed a variety of strategies to better coordinate our efforts to further develop a theology of migration; advance advocacy for immigrant justice; provide leadership formation; and organize direct action, our conversation always included Jakelin and Felipe and all who have suffered as a result of our unjust immigration system.” said Ann Scholz, SSND, associate director for social mission, who represented LCWR at the summit.

The two-day meeting coincided with the gathering of the Tex-Mex Bishops’ Conference and provided the opportunity for cross-group prayer and dialogue about ways to strengthen the collective impact of the faith community on issues of migration. The event also included an interfaith gathering February 26 at the Anapra (New Mexico) border fence. There, people of faith on both sides of the border joined together for interreligious prayer and solidarity. Participants also had the opportunity to join recently arrived immigrants for liturgy and breakfast at the diocesan center on the final day of the conference.

## Global Concerns Committee Expands ‘Standing Against Racism’ Campaign

The Global Concerns Committee will launch a social media campaign to fight systemic racism on April 3, 2019. The campaign, which will run through May 15, is designed to draw attention to the call of the [2018 LCWR Assembly Resolution](#) to end systemic racism and will introduce the public to the words and wisdom of LCWR members. Posts will feature graphics that depict women religious of color and illustrate past calls to LCWR members to take responsibility for “our own complicity, and purging ourselves, our communities, and our country of the sin of racism and its destructive effects.”



Each Wednesday from April 3 to May 15, LCWR will post one of these messages on the LCWR Facebook page and Tweet it out to followers. Members are encouraged to enlist the help of their communicators and justice promoters to share these posts on their own community’s pages and to ask members to share them on their own personal social networks. The more the posts are shared, the more people who might be inspired to join LCWR in #StandingAgainstRacism.

## Standing Against Racism Resource Sharing Column

**Black Lives Matter: Eliminating Racial Inequality in the Criminal Justice System by Nazgol Ghandnoosh, PhD**, an article which appeared in the [Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center’s A Matter of Spirit](#), No. 106/Spring 2015.



Reviewed by Sue Dunning, CSJ

Dr. Ghandnoosh notes that “Black lives matter” has become a rallying cry in large part because the criminal justice system is failing to uphold this basic truth. She identifies four features of the justice system that contribute to disparate racial impact and presents best practices for targeting these inequities.

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- Letter to members of the House of Representative urging them to support the bipartisan *Joint Resolution 37* which invokes the *War Powers Resolution of 1973* to end the unconstitutional U.S. military participation in the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen. LCWR (2/11/19)
- Letter to Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen, condemn the baseless and immoral *Migrant Protection Protocols*, also known as the *Remain in Mexico Policy*. LCWR (2/15/19)
- Letter to House and Senate leadership urging Congress to pass HR 8, the *Bipartisan Background Check Act of 2019* and take a crucial first step towards gun violence prevention. LCWR (2/27/19)
- Interfaith letter to Congress urging legislators to include the faith community's perspective as they draft legislation to reach the goals laid out in the Green New Deal resolution. LCWR (3/2/29)
- Amicus brief in support of youth's right to supportive natural environment in *Kelsey Cascadia Rose Juliana, et al., Plaintiffs-Appellees, v. United States of America, et al., Defendants-Appellants*. LCWR (2/26/19)
- Letter to Kristjen Nielsen, Secretary of Homeland Security and Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State requesting that they designate Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) under INA § 244. LCWR (2/27/19)
- Letter to members of Congress requesting that they co-sponsor and pass a permanent, legislative solution in order to provide urgently needed protection for over a million dreamers and recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). LCWR (2/27/19)
- Faith statement included in the Bread for the World 2019 Hunger Report. Carol Zinn, SSJ (2/28/19)
- Letter to members of Congress urging them to preserve and strengthen the family-based immigration system and calling on both chambers to pass the *Reuniting Families Act* (RFA) - without

- undermining immigrant or border communities. LCWR (3/15/19)
- Endorsement of the *Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act* which would require the US government, in collaboration with global civil society, to develop a 10-year strategy to bring down current levels of global violence and better address the root causes of violence, violent conflict, and fragility that drive recurrent global crises. LCWR (3/7/19)
- Faith-based letter to members of the House in support of three bills drafted to mitigate the profound harms of border wall construction on border communities, property owners, the environment and wildlife, HR 1232, HR 1233 and HR 1234. LCWR (3/11/19)
- Amicus brief filed with CLINIC in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in *OLBD, Petitioner v. William P. Barr, Attorney General of the US* on a petition for review of an order of the Board of Immigration Appeals. LCWR (3/11/18)

## Standing Against Racism Resource Sharing Column

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One of the best practices outlined in Dr. Ghandnoosh's article calls for the criminal justice system to: *Address implicit racial bias among criminal justice professionals*. I would invite us to begin addressing this implicit racial bias in our own lives in order to eliminate the disparity that exists in our society by nurturing relationships of inclusivity among all people, especially people of color.



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## Legislation Moving in the House of Representatives

On March 8 the House of Representatives passed landmark election reform legislation, the *For the People Act* (HR 1). The bill contains sweeping reforms to campaign finance, voting, and ethics rules.



Proponents of the legislation maintain that this reform is essential to our democracy as it helps to ensure that all Americans have an equal access to the electoral system. Its sponsor, Rep. Sarbanes (D-MD 3), says “It aims to rebalance power in our nation’s capital and put everyday Americans back in charge of our democracy by cleaning up corruption in Washington, ending the dominance of big money in our politics, and ensuring the right to vote.” The Senate must now act on what the House has passed. Observers suggest that components of HR 1 could form a package of provisions on which Senate Democrats and Republicans can agree.

Members of the House are also moving immigration legislation forward. On March 12 Representative Clarke, Velasquez, and Roybal-Allard introduced HR 6, the *Dream and Promise Act 2019* in the US House of Representatives. The bill combines previous versions of both the Dream Act and the American Promise Act, which were designed to protect individuals living in the United States for extended periods of time and facing potential deportation.

The legislation provides a pathway to citizenship for eligible Dreamers who entered the US as children, offering them a chance to earn citizenship through education, employment, or military service. In addition, the bill secures an opportunity for citizenship for people with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status. Additional information may be found [here](#).

## Faith Leaders Celebrate Passage of Gun Violence Prevention Legislation

Last week, the House of Representatives passed two bills aimed at limiting gun violence. The first was [HR 8](#), the bi-partisan bill to expand background checks. This bill requires universal background checks for all firearm purchases and transfers, with few exceptions. It requires unlicensed and private sellers, like those online and at gun shows, to use the same background check system required of licensed dealers. Currently 22 percent of guns are purchased without a background check through unlicensed and private sellers.



The second bill, the *Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2019* ([HR 1112](#)) addresses the so-called “Charleston Loophole” and minimizes the risk of gun sales proceeding before a background check is completed by extending the time granted to law enforcement to complete the check from three to 10 business days.

*Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence* (FUPGV), a diverse multi-faith coalition of more than 50 faith-based organizations and denominations, had urged the passage of legislation to require background checks for all gun sales. Universal background checks have been proven to help prevent people from acquiring guns who should not have access to firearms. Since 1994, more than 3 million people legally prohibited from owning a gun have been denied the chance to purchase one because of existing background check laws.

In a letter to members of the House from faith leaders, Carol Zinn, SSJ, LCWR executive director, wrote, “Each day we grieve with families whose loved ones are victims of senseless gun violence. We promise our prayers and mourn their loss, yet we know that is not enough. Every life is a gift from God worthy of our respect and protection. It is long past time that Congress enacted sensible gun violence prevention legislation. We urge members of Congress to act on this important piece of bipartisan legislation that will reduce gun violence and protect the precious gift of life.”

## Plan to Celebrate Earth Day

In the face of increasing threats to creation, Catholics around the world are standing up for the Earth and all its inhabitants. This Earth Day, the [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) (GCCM) is focusing its celebration of Earth on the Amazon where forests and their rich diversity of life are being eradicated. Join GCCM in a prophetic action this Earth Day: plant a tree to celebrate a commitment to protecting forests in the Amazon and beyond; and send a letter to your local officials, urging action on climate change to protect the Amazon and all of creation. GCCM's Earth Day resources can be found [here](#).

The [Catholic Climate Covenant](#) (CCC) has chosen "All Creation Gives God Praise: Protecting Biodiversity in a Time of Climate Crisis" for the 2019 edition of their Earth Day educational program. The diversity and the populations of species are declining at alarming rates. Grounded in scripture, Catholic social teaching, and *Laudato Si*, this year's Earth Day program will help mobilize the Catholic community to take urgent action to protect all of God's creation.

The one-hour educational program will include prayers, readings, a short video, and suggested activities. Those interested may sign up to receive CCC's 2019 Earth Day packet [here](#).



## Is Your Leadership Term About to End?

If your leadership term is ending this month, we ask you to submit a change of leadership form found in the [LCWR Members' Information](#) section (password-protected) of the website.

## NCDC Offers Workshop on Development and Mission Advancement

For more than 10 years, the National Catholic Development Conference (NCDC) has offered an extremely popular workshop, "Fundamentals and More," especially designed for religious institutes that currently have no resource development program. This workshop was created in response to a survey of religious institutes conducted by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and NCDC that indicated some significant trends:



1. Most religious institutes are struggling financially.
2. Most realize they need new sources of revenue and support.
3. There are a significant number of viable institutes who do not have a resource development program in place.
4. Most of these groups are interested in learning how to establish such a program.

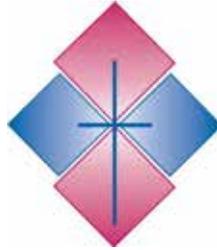
At the recommendation of past participants and the requests of those still interested in attending this program, NCDC is again offering "Fundamentals and More." This year's workshop will take place May 6-8, 2019 at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, Illinois.

Because NRRO believes so strongly in this program, its retirement office is willing to once again offer grants for religious institutes to attend this workshop. Previous workshop attendees included persons in leadership, treasurers and, in some cases, a person who was designated as the future development director.

Those seeking more information or who wish to register for the program, may visit the NCDC website at [www.ncdc.org](http://www.ncdc.org) and click on Events & Services -- Fundamentals and More, call NCDC office at 202-637-0470 or contact Nick Whims at [nwhims@ncdc.org](mailto:nwhims@ncdc.org).

## NRRO Offers Webinars

In conjunction with the Avila Institute of Gerontology, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) offers a free quarterly webinar series on a wide range of topics associated with retirement and eldercare. The latest webinar, for example, overviewed how person-centered care can support the social and emotional needs of elder members with dementia. Other recent webinars have addressed governmental benefits, support for hearing loss, and palliative care. Webinars are free and last just 60 minutes. If the date or time is not convenient, recorded versions can be accessed 24-7 through [NRRO's online archive](#).



The next webinar will be on May 14 when Sharon Euart, RSM, executive director of the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) and Christopher J. Fusco, RCRI's associate director of civil law, will address civil and canon law issues as they relate to healthcare.

## RCRI's 2019 Annual Conference

### 10-year Anniversary

Hyatt Regency Hotel -- Dallas, Texas

October 1-4

A glorious history to remember...  
a great history yet to be accomplished

Keynote: Norma Pimentel, MJ

The 2019 program will include 39 workshops covering topics related to finance, canon and civil law, and planning for institutes for transition.

The program will also include a track on eldercare sponsored by NRRO.

Four pre-conference workshops will be offered:

- Commissaries – Nature, Role and Functions
- Cor Orans – Implementation of the Norms
- Legal Overview for Religious Institutes in 2019
- TRENDS for Beginners



## Workshop Registrations Open for Summer and Fall Institutes

This year, NRVC is offering nine workshops for all those entrusted with the assessment of discerners and candidates. NRVC has 19 presenters representing diverse fields who will offer programs designed to assist participants to enhance their professional competencies, engage in networking on a national level, and provide an inclusive approach to vocation ministry and the full flourishing of religious life. Information is available online about the workshops for the [Summer Institute](#) in Chicago and the [Fall Institute](#) in Leavenworth, Kansas.

## Response to Synod

Because vocation directors intersect with seekers, inquirers, nones, and curious young people at the margins, NRVC has been invited by the National Dialogue on Catholic Pastoral Ministry with Youth and Young Adults, to hold listening sessions in order to help the Catholic Church better understand and minister to them. Specifically, NRVC was invited to host conversations with any of the following audience types:

- Former and/or marginal Catholic youth and/or young adults
- Active or engaged youth and/or young adults
- Parents and families of youth and/or young adults
- Ministry leaders who work with youth and/or young adults

Anyone interested in hosting a local conversation may visit the [National Dialogue's Conversation page](#) for resources and more information or contact the organizers at [dialogue@nationaldialogue.info](mailto:dialogue@nationaldialogue.info). Questions have been provided for the conversations, and organizers are asked to complete an online survey after their conversations so that their feedback can be included in the national dialogue report.



by Joan Mumaw, IHM  
President  
[www.solidarityfriends.org](http://www.solidarityfriends.org)

**“Prioritizing hope...is a brave and bold thing to do.”**

The above quote by Ava Du Vernay in an article entitled “Seeing the Bright Side” (*Time*, 2-8-19) seems an apt approach to writing about the work of Solidarity and South Sudan these days. She goes on to say, “the vital moment comes when we each must understand that the social, political and historical connectedness born of traumatic experiences can and should transform to true...engagement with one another.” We see this in the #MeToo movement and in the action of the Parkland youth against gun violence. And we see this with the commitment of religious men and women of Solidarity with South Sudan. Solidarity is committed to peace-making and to gender equality. Members have “stayed the course” and are a hope-filled presence in the midst of civil war in South Sudan.

Solidarity places a preference on recruiting women for studies to become teachers, registered nurses, and certified midwives. In January, thanks to a grant from a European foundation, the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) at Wau broke ground for construction of a new women’s dorm on the campus. When completed, this will enable the CHTI to recruit an equal number of women as men to join the three-year program to become registered nurses and midwives. Solidarity seeks to raise additional funds needed to provide “scholarships” for more women to join the student body. We still need to raise \$75,000 to cover operational expenses for 2019. This represents about 10% of the operational budget for this year. The cost to support one student for one year is approximately \$6500 and this covers room, board, tuition and, if necessary for safety and security, transportation. For more information contact: [jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com](mailto:jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com)

There is some indication that the re-signed peace agreement (September 2018) is holding. People remain hopeful, if not optimistic. The country has been down this road several times before. In Wau, the site of the

CHTI, many who have been encamped at the cathedral or the UN Camp are taking the courageous step of returning to their homes and plots of land to rebuild their lives. They will require assistance as most have lost everything while fleeing to safety during these past five years.

The South Sudan economy is in free-fall; the government is unable to pay salaries or even pay for the implementation of the peace process. It is important that we continue to urge the US and the international community to continue to support the people with humanitarian assistance so as to avoid the predicted famine. South Sudan has the potential, given its resources (oil, minerals, agricultural products) to feed its own people, but peace is essential for this to become a reality. We continue to pray for peace with justice for this newly independent nation.

On another note, we were privileged to have Cardinal Joseph Tobin, CSsR, bless our offices when he visited us (LCWR, RCRI and FiS) on March 11. Cardinal Tobin was among the early group of major superiors who supported Solidarity when he was general superior of the Redemptorists. He continues to support the work of Friends as we support the work of Solidarity with South Sudan.



Joan Mumaw, IHM  
and Cardinal Tobin

## 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 United Nations 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](#).