



December 2019

LCWR Initiates National Discernment to Explore New Possibilities for Collaborative Religious Institute Leadership

LCWR has initiated an important new effort to explore collaborative and creative ways of leading US religious life in the near future. This new initiative, which is the second phase of LCWR's transition services ministry, provides an opportunity for leadership teams within LCWR to participate in a national discernment on future possibilities. To that end, all LCWR institutes are invited to send two members to one of five LCWR geographic gatherings in spring 2020. Through a generous grant from the GHR Foundation, **the costs of travel, accommodations, and materials will be covered for each participant.**

The geographic gatherings of leaders will mark a significant step on the communal journey of US religious institutes. From its national perspective, LCWR is observing that all US religious institutes are in some form of significant transition. Of utmost interest is the exploration of collaborative possibilities to provide leadership as religious life evolves. In partnership with GHR, LCWR is addressing this reality by initiating a process of national conversation and discernment where all leaders will be invited to practice anticipatory leadership for the whole of religious life through a process that seeks to:

1. Initiate conversation among LCWR members in geographical settings about possible creative collaboration around leadership.
2. Generate a national profile of the capacity for leadership that exists in congregations to better understand the needs that the national body of religious institutes have collectively.

On November 4, LCWR sent to all members a request to begin this discernment process by doing the following:



The geographic gatherings of leaders will mark a significant step on the communal journey of US religious institutes.

- View together as leadership teams a 20-minute video presenting the background, purpose, and process of this new phase of LCWR's transition services ministry.
- Review the "Reference for Canonical Governance" document and engage in reflection and conversation as a team on the video and document.
- Return the feedback form found online to Janette Houhoulis at jcahill@lcwr.org on or before **Monday, December 16, 2019.**

These materials are all available on the members' side of the LCWR website under "Canonical Governance Matters."

Registration will open soon for the five geographic gatherings. Two leaders from each LCWR member

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From the LCWR Presidency

In Hopeful Expectation

by Elise D. García, OP — LCWR President-Elect

As we enter this season of Advent in hopeful expectation of the new life that Mary will soon birth, the nations of the world gather in Madrid for their 25th year of climate talks, with the window for meaningful action fast closing.

These last weeks of 2019 bring us to the brink of the last remaining decade in humanity's brief span on Earth when our actions, or inactions, will determine the fate of the Earth community. Will we carve a new evolutionary path* for the common good of all? Or sentence the new life in all the "Marys" of the world – and millions of other species – to irreversible climate chaos and its unimaginable consequences?

The coming 2020s also mark a decade when religious life in the United States will undergo massive change, with the window for meaningful action also fast closing. We face a similar opportunity to carve a new evolutionary path for the future unfolding of religious life. The steps we leaders take now will make all the difference to the birthing of new life that the younger sisters, or "Marys," in our congregations are now carrying.

The parallels of peril and promise, although on very different orders of magnitude, are striking. It will take the same kind of awareness and shift in consciousness in both arenas to negotiate the challenging years ahead. The shift begins by recognizing that most of us in leadership today will not be alive to experience the consequences of our action, or inaction, in the near future of religious or Earthly life.

We who are entrusted with leadership positions today are largely "Elizabeths" – women in advancing years with surprising fecundity. Like the "Marys" in our congregations, we "Elizabeths" are also called to birth the new. We share with our "Marys" a common ancestry and faith tradition, a deep love for one another and a Spirit-centered life. And the new life in each of us



Our life form as
women religious
is entering a global phase
of sisterhood.

is to be given over for the common good of the whole.

But we face very different futures.

The "Marys" in our communities – and those we have yet to meet – will live and minister into the 2030s, 2040s, 2050s and beyond. We "Elizabeths" will not; yet what we and our fellow humans do within the next 10 years will inalterably shape their lives – and the lives of all peoples and species on Earth – for the rest of the century and beyond.

It can be no accident that we US women religious, despite our fast-receding numbers, have been among those at the global forefront of addressing climate change, practicing "integral ecology" long before Pope Francis boldly called the world to it as a response to the interconnected cry of the Earth and the poor. Are we not provisioned to help the world meet this fraught moment in the arc of God's unfolding creation? Our life

form as women religious is entering a global phase of sisterhood. The porosity of our congregational and national borders is facilitating new ways of bonding and collaborating for the larger common good. The technological noosphere is enabling us to magnify our voices globally even as we grow smaller in number.

In the pivotal years ahead, as we live at the prophetic edge of society – conserving our lands as perpetual signs of our care of creation, greening and repurposing our buildings in support of our values, entrusting our ministries to lay partners, and otherwise "decarbonizing" the life for the larger common good – we create an unencumbered path for our "Marys." May their lighter footprint more nimbly serve the larger purpose for which we came: To ensure that all the "Marys" of the world await a future full of hope.

** I thank Constance FitzGerald, OCD, for this felicitous phrase.*

LCWR Initiates National Discernment on Religious Institute Leadership

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institute are asked to attend one gathering in the area closest to them. The hope for these gatherings is that they will bring together as many religious institutes within an area as possible, yet be intimate enough for meaningful reflection and conversation, thus the limit to the numbers. The gatherings will be:

- April 21-22, 2020: Hyatt Regency Dallas DFW
- May 20-21, 2020: Sheraton BWI (Washington, DC area)
- June 1-2, 2020: Sheraton Westport Chalet (St. Louis)
- June 3-4, 2020: Crown Plaza O'Hare (Chicago)
- June 16-17, 2020: Sheraton BWI (Washington, DC area)

Each meeting begins at 1 PM on the first day and ends at 4 PM on the second day. The gatherings will provide the opportunity for a facilitated conversation about capacity for leadership within that geographical area and the possibility of collaboration among the religious institutes in that area. The meetings will be conducted in a spirit of contemplation, dialogue, and discernment.

Many leadership teams have already submitted their feedback and a few have asked if their entire team could attend a geographic gathering, noting that they would cover the cost for the additional team members. At this time, LCWR suggests the following to congregations that would like to make the same request:

1. Indicate on the feedback from which two team members will attend a geographic gathering.
2. Add the names and emails of the additional team members who would also like to attend to the form.

Once LCWR has all the requests it will see if it can accommodate additional team members.

The possibilities ahead needs the prayer, expertise, skills, and creativity of all LCWR members. Further exploration of this work will continue during the 2020 LCWR assembly. Any questions about this initiative may be directed to LCWR executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ (czinn@lcwr.org) or to the director of transition services Mary Hughes, OP (mhughes@lcwr.org).



Exploring Religious Leadership Questions with Facilitators and Consultants

On November 19, approximately 40 professional facilitators and consultants currently working with religious institutes, as well as executive directors of charism families/federations, gathered with LCWR staff in Chicago to discuss the need to explore possible new ways for religious institutes to collaborate on leadership in the near future as institutes experience significant transition.

LCWR believes it is critical that those working closely with institutes of women religious understand the national view of US religious life and LCWR's discernment initiative. At the one-day gathering, Carol Zinn, SSJ and Mary Hughes, OP gave an overview of the future leadership capacities within religious institutes, noting the impact of shifting demographics and the possibilities and challenges that impact brings.

Those present spent the day discussing how they might collaborate with LCWR and with one another as they accompany religious institutes throughout these next challenging years. The participants noted the importance of their being kept up to date with the national and geographic initiatives so that they can best assist the communities with whom they will be working.

New Procedures for Reporting Abuse Impact Women Religious

All religious institute leaders are encouraged to learn about the new canonical procedures for reporting abuse and violence that ensure that bishops and religious superiors are held accountable for their actions. The document includes the obligation for clerics and religious to report abuse.



Pope Francis issued the *motu proprio*, "*Vos estis lux mundi*" (You are the light of the world), which lays out the procedures on May 7, 2019. The edict followed the meeting for the protection of minors that Pope Francis convoked this past February in which he called for universal and concrete measures to fight sexual abuse. The norms became law on June 1, 2019 and apply to the church in every part of the world.

Vos estis incorporates several new features to address sexual misconduct. For example, it establishes new procedures for reporting sexual abuse in the church to include use of violence or intimidation to engage in sexual acts, broadens the definition of "vulnerable adult," requires all clerics and religious men and women to report abuse, calls church leaders to provide for the spiritual and emotional well-being of victims/survivors and their families, and describes a new role for the metropolitan archbishop in the preliminary investigation of allegations against bishops and supreme moderators of religious institutes with the assistance of lay experts.

RCRI Offers Free Webinar on *Vos Estis*

To assist religious leaders in addressing *Vos estis*, the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) is holding a webinar on December 12, 2019 at 2:00 EST to look at the *motu proprio's* civil and canonical implications for religious men and women. A panel will also provide the latest insight and best practices for complying with the new directives.

The webinar is free and can accommodate an unlimited number of participants. RCRI encourages leaders to invite others to participate in the webinar

who may be interested in the topic. The webinar will also be available for viewing after it takes place.

[Registration is open now.](#) Questions may be directed to RCRI at 301-589-8143.



Members of the LCWR staff and Solidarity with Sisters meet with a German delegation of Pastoral Innovation

LCWR Welcomes German Church Delegation

For several years, LCWR has hosted delegations from the European organization, [Pastoral Innovation](#). The delegations, led by the organization's head, Georg Plank, travel to various parts of the world to visit with groups that work toward expanding understandings of church.

Joining LCWR and the delegation this year on November 7 were members of [Solidarity with Sisters](#), a DC-based group of women and men who companion the LCWR staff. Through conversation at the LCWR office, the groups discussed observations and trends that they have experienced through their work with the church at various levels. This year's delegation consisted of eight participants from the German diocese of Fulda.

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.



Exploring LCWR's Emerging Orientations

The emerging orientations affirmed at the 2019 LCWR assembly served as the focus for rich conversations among the LCWR national board, regional chairs, and staff at the November 5-6 board meeting held at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Maryland. The board and staff were gathered in person and were joined for part of the meeting by the regional chairs through videoconferencing for an enthusiastic and engaging discussion of how the orientations influence leadership.

The conversations took place in seven small groups where the participants explored the orientations in light of the LCWR Call for 2015-2022; the LCWR assembly resolution on the intersection of climate change, migration, and racism; feedback from the regions on the orientations; and the addresses by Pat Murray, IBVM and Sharlet Wagner, CSC at the assembly.

Following the conversations with the regional chairs, the board and staff continued exploring the orientations and were energized by the key insight that the orientations are a way of *being* in leadership at this moment, rather than tasks to be accomplished, and that they encompass both the vulnerabilities and strengths of those in leadership today. The orientations are set in a larger context of who women religious are and they flow from the deep theological and spiritual grounding of their lives.

As next steps, the board named the following:

- Both the board and staff will use the emerging orientations as a “touchstone” for their work.
- A small group of board members and national office staff will develop a short reflection guide that can

be used to further dialogue about the orientations at the spring regional meetings.

As contemplative dialogue continued throughout the board meeting, the shared understanding of the orientations grew even deeper. The board noted that they consider the orientations fluid stating that as the lived realities of religious life are in constant change, so too will the lived expressions of these orientations change.

Other business on the board agenda included:

- Plans for the 2020 LCWR assembly
- Various collaborative initiatives underway
- Committee and finance reports
- Appointment of Eileen McKenzie, FSPA to the LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Committee



LCWR board and staff join with the regional chairs for conversations on LCWR's emerging orientations



Conversations with the regional chairs helped clarify the notion that the orientations are a way of being in leadership at this moment, rather than tasks to be accomplished

Orders Accepted for Winter 2020 Occasional Papers



Orders are now being taken for the Winter 2020 issue of *Occasional Papers*, the journal of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Orders must be received by **December 20**.

The issue derives its title, **Leading with Moral Imagination**, from the work of John Paul Lederach. He states that moral imagination “develops a capacity to perceive things beyond and at a deeper level than what initially meets the eye. It has a capacity to give birth to something new that in its very birthing changes our world and the way we see things.” (*The Moral Imagination*, p. 27) Lederach uses the word “moral” to refer to that which is great and beckons us to rise toward something beyond what is apparent and visible; while he speaks of “imagination” as the art of creating what does not yet exist.

Clearly, this is a time in religious life where we need to keep our focus on that which the world needs that is great but perhaps not yet apparent, as well as on what we, as religious, might help create so as to bring about what the world most needs.

In this issue of *Occasional Papers*, we explore what this challenge means for those in religious life today. How does the call to lead with moral imagination impact how leadership in religious life is taking place, or how we might like to see it taking place? We know that

this type of leadership may differ from religious life leadership that served well in the past. How might we reshape our understandings of leadership and the role of religious life for these times? The issue features an interview with John Paul Lederach, professor emeritus of international peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame.

Subscriptions are also available for *Occasional Papers*.

New Option for International Orders

A new option has been added for those living outside of the United States and who would like to subscribe and receive DIGITAL copies of *Occasional Papers*. The cost of a one-year subscription is \$10 - and there is no additional charge for handling. The digital copy will be sent at the same time that the print copies go in the mail. Readers, however, are asked not to share these files and to keep the downloaded copy on the device of the person ordering the copy. LCWR is dependent upon its revenue from publication sales.

Questions may be directed to LCWR’s administrative assistant Carol Glidden at cglidden@lcsr.org or at 301-588-4955.



We give thanks for you, the members, associates, friends, and supporters of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Your lives are an inspiration to us.

Blessings to you this Thanksgiving.

The presidents, board, regional chairs, and staff of LCWR

LCWR Officers Participate in Various Meetings to Explore the Gospel Mission

LCWR, CMSWR and CMSM Discuss 'New Wine in New Wineskins'

The LCWR executive committee of the board spent an afternoon on November 7 with other religious conference leaders for prayer, reflection, relationship-building, conversation, and planning. Participating from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) were Mark Padrez, OP (executive director); Adam Gonzales, OCD (president); Patrick McNamara, FMS (vice-president); from the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious Mary Christine Cremin, RSM (executive director), and from LCWR Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ (president), Elise García, OP (president-elect); Sharlet Wagner, CSC (past-president); Yesenia Fernandez, MGSps (board member); and Carol Zinn, SSJ (executive director).

The document, "New Wine in New Wineskins," provided the framework for the group's reflection and conversation. Published in 2017 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), this document invites a thoughtful and focused reflection on the renewal efforts initiated by Vatican Council II for all forms of consecrated life. All found a wealth of richness and depth in the document and felt called to invite their respective members to read and reflect on the document. There is a very comprehensive webinar available on [UISG's website](#) that members might find helpful.

The group also discussed the joint visits that CMSM and LCWR will make to various Vatican dicasteries in May 2020 and some of the topics the conferences wish to raise with Vatican officials.

LCWR at USCCB Meetings

Commission on Religious Life and Ministry

The Commission on Religious Life and Ministry exists within the structure of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as the venue for conversation among the executive committees of the conferences of religious (CMSM, CMSWR and LCWR), the National Conference



Meeting of the Commission on Religious Life and Ministry: Mary Christine Cremin, RSM; Carol Zinn, SSJ; and Cardinal Joseph Tobin

of Vicars for Religious (represented by executive director Maryann Lopiccolo, SC), the National Religious Retirement Office (represented by executive director Stephanie Still, PBVM) and the bishops. The CRLM is chaired by Cardinal Joseph Tobin (who finishes his three-year term this year) and has been a place of meaningful reflection on the various aspects of religious life and ministry in the United States. On November 8, the CRLM meeting convened at the Baltimore Marriott where the annual USCCB meeting is held. Beginning with liturgy, the commission members then spent time in fruitful conversation about the activities of each of the conferences over the past year and the intersection of the work of each, as well as the pending document on mutual relations. The CRLM sees this document as a vehicle to further conversations and relationships between women and men religious and their local bishops in service to the mission of the church.

Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations

LCWR executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ represented the conference on November 9 at the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV) which

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LCWR at USCCB Meetings

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met for the morning at the Baltimore Marriott hotel. This committee functions within the USCCB and is the venue for bringing together the various aspects of vocations to consecrated life and priesthood. This committee is chaired by Cardinal Tobin and attended by the executive directors of the more than 15 national organizations representing the ministries of vocations, consecrated life, and vocations.

The theme of the 2019 meeting was, “Hope in the Midst of Challenge” and the conversation focused on the many places where hope exists even if not always raised up. The call to notice these signs of hope became increasingly clear as the meeting unfolded. Another point of insight was the articulation of the need and desire among the committee members to collaborate more and with an increased effort at sending a common message about vocations to a gospel way of life.

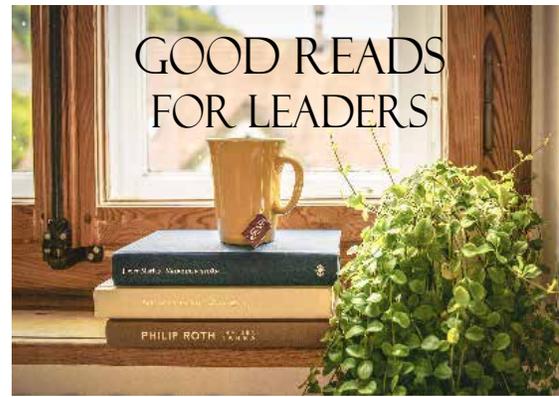
The committee thanked Cardinal Tobin for his service. Bishop James F. Checchio of Metuchen will serve as the new chair.

USCCB General Assembly

The LCWR presidency and executive director attended two days (November 11 and 12) of the USCCB general assembly as observers. While observers are not permitted to interact with the bishops in any way during the meeting times, the LCWR officers had many opportunities during breaks to speak with various bishops and to provide a visible presence of LCWR women religious to members of the hierarchy. A highlight during the meetings was the opportunity to enjoy lunch with representatives from CMSWR who were also at the meeting.



Meeting of the Commission on Religious Life and Ministry: Elise García, OP; Mary Ann Lopiccolo, SC; and Stephanie Still, PBVM



Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future

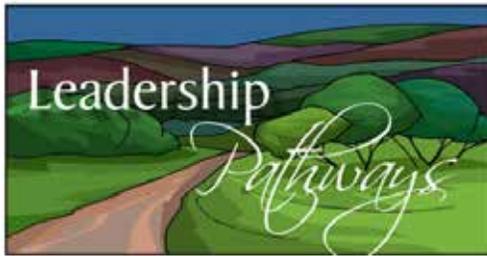
by Mary Robinson

Reviewed by Margaret Magee, OSF

This is a critical time and the opportune moment to read this book by Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland and United Nations special envoy on climate change. In her book, Mary relates the stories of seven individuals, mostly women, many of whom come from poor and environmentally challenged countries. Stories like that of Constance Okollet, a farmer in eastern rural Uganda, and Sharon Hansaw, a beautician in East Biloxi, Mississippi who experienced the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The stories of Jannie Staffansson, an indigenous women of the nomadic Saami people of Sweden, and others help the reader realize how critically fragile and dangerous the daily lives of some people have become because of the climate crisis and the lack of commitment to climate justice and the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In her writing, Mary is not shy to call out President Donald Trump, as a “Climate Denier” and for his pulling the United States out of the COP21 Paris Agreement.

Mary Robinson reminds us, through the stories of others, that we live in the reality of total interrelatedness and interconnectedness on this our Common Home, our Sister Mother Earth. This book is a call to climate conversion!



What's Happening in LCWR's Programs

Deepening Groups

Three years ago, at the request of a number of interested members, LCWR provided a process to assist members in forming deepening groups. At the time 11 different groups formed. These groups, which are self-directed, meet virtually. The schedule and frequency of meeting is determined by the group itself and ranges from once every six weeks to four times a year. The groups explore issues, concerns, and areas of challenge in their ministry of elected leadership, choosing the topics and resources on which they wish to focus.

LCWR would like to offer members who have joined LCWR in the past three years (or members who did not join a deepening group initially and may wish to do so at this time) an opportunity to form some new deepening groups. Interested members need to register by December 15, 2019. LCWR will then be in touch with those who have expressed interest in order to assist them in forming a group and getting started.

A Guide to Facilitation Skills

Recently LCWR launched a new offering in Leadership Pathways: "A Guide to Facilitation Skills: How to Improve Your Odds of Hosting a Great Meeting." This particular offering aims to assist all leaders in gaining some fundamental ease with facilitating various meetings and processes. It is not intended to train individuals to be facilitators so much as to assist them in the fundamentals of facilitating and of knowing when it might be wise to use a facilitator.

Along with the online offering, this material was recently offered in a pilot workshop for two leadership teams. For this workshop significant portions of the material were translated into Spanish and French

and are available in the online version. Initial reports indicate that the workshop was very helpful to the leadership teams who participated.

Any leadership team or group of leaders from a region or local area who would like to have this program offered in the form of a workshop or in the online format, may contact LCWR director for programs Marie McCarthy, SP who will assist them in this process. This offering is offered in a rolling registration so it can be started at any time during the year.

Online Pathways Offerings

There are several courses in transformational leadership that are available online. In order to better accommodate leaders needs and time frames, LCWR is experimenting with a rolling registration for these offerings as well. Any leadership team or self-selected group (up to six persons) may begin any of the offerings at any time.

New Leader Workshop

Registration is open for this [workshop](#) for those in elected leadership for two years or fewer. Held March 26-29 in Mundelein, Illinois, this event provides resources and processes that assist participants in developing the dispositions and skills needed to serve as a transformational leader.

Practicing Leadership Workshop

The [Practicing Leadership Workshop](#) which was offered as a pilot this past year will be offered again twice during the coming year. A full description of the workshop is available on the LCWR website and the dates and locations for this coming year's workshops can be found in this newsletter under LCWR Upcoming Dates.

Imagining Justice

Registration for LCWR's [Imagining Justice Event](#), *The Beautiful Not Yet: Hope, Hard Times and Faithfulness*, featuring Carrie Newcomer, is currently open. This workshop/retreat is intended to assist leadership personnel and justice promoters in staying connected with the deep grounding of their work for justice. The event will be held in Marriottsville, Maryland from April 20 – 23.. Space is limited.

Full information about these offerings is available on the LCWR website. Anyone interested in registering for any of these opportunities may do so by contacting Marie McCarthy at mmccarthy@lcwr.org.

Upcoming LCWR Dates

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

Mater Dolorosa Retreat House | Sierra Madre, CA
May 11 — 13, 2020

LCWR Assembly

Dallas, Texas
August 11 — 15, 2020

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

Bethany Center | Lutz, Florida
September 14 — 16, 2020

Leading from Within Retreat

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

LCWR New Leader Workshop

Conference Center
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois
March 25 — 28, 2021

LCWR Assembly

Orlando, Florida
August 10 — 13, 2021

Leading from Within Retreat

Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona
January 16 — 21, 2022

LCWR Assembly

St. Louis, Missouri
August 9 — 12, 2022

Catholic Groups Unite in Support of DACA Program

On November 12, Catholics from across the United States gathered at Columbus Circle in Washington, DC to pray and to call attention to the US Supreme Court hearing on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Since President Obama's executive order creating DACA in 2012, religious communities have supported the program as a compassionate response to the untenable situation facing immigrants brought to the US as children. In many cases the United States is the only home they have ever known.

In a written statement LCWR executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ stated, "President Trump's decision to terminate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was unfair and badly misguided. DACA provides a common-sense path to stability for families, communities, and local economies and it is a reaffirmation of core American values."

A Rosary Walk was led by DACA recipients and activists in the faith community and culminated at the steps of the US Supreme Court where they joined the national rally organized by the Home is Here campaign. LCWR was among the groups organizing the event.

Giovana A. Oaxaca Najera, government relations associate for NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and a DACA recipient, described the situation of many immigrants, "The outcome of the DACA case at the hands of the Supreme Court weighs heavily on the immigrant community. The fear and uncertainty can be fairly oppressive, but today's rally gives new breath to the impetus for legislative action and hope to our communities. In this moment, we are reminded that DACA granted extensive protections for qualified individuals, but many more, remain in the shadows. I'm pleased to be a part of the faith community's response, as we pray for a just way forward for DACA recipients and others affected by the Trump administration's cruel immigration policy."



Catholic Coalition Takes Campaign for Immigrant Children to the Border

LCWR was among the DC-based organizers who joined immigrants and activists for a teach-in and public action October 11-13 in El Paso, Texas. Catholic Latinx organizers, labor leaders, theologians, and activists gathered in response to the massacre of 22 Latinx people on August 3 and the continued inhumane treatment of migrants and refugees at the border.

They came to listen and learn from those most directly affected by harmful US policy. The US-Mexico border has been the site of abhorrent treatment of immigrants, including cruel conditions in detention facilities, the separation of families, continuing deaths in the borderlands, and the “Remain in Mexico” policy, which has trapped asylum seekers in Mexico. This was also the third and final public action in their months-long “Catholic Campaign for Immigrant Children and Families.”

On the afternoon of October 12, scores of faith leaders including members of the DC Catholic Coalition, Latinx Catholic Leadership Coalition, and the El Paso-based Hope Border Institute mobilized almost 400 Catholics for a binational nonviolent action. Some walked the streets of El Paso pausing along the way to pray. Others crossed the border-bridge to Ciudad Juárez for an emotional encounter with migrants camped at the foot of the Santa Fe bridge waiting for the chance to present themselves to US Customs and Border Protection and ask for asylum. “We met families with children as young as three-months living in tents waiting their turn to cross in search of safety,” said Ann Scholz, SSND, LCWR’s associate director for Social Mission, “I was struck by the faith, resilience, and agency of these families who had risked everything for the sake of their children.”

As the group of US pilgrims made its way back across the bridge, each paused before the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, blessed the bridge, and prayed for justice for all immigrants. After the blessing, Catholic leaders from the various coalitions accompanied 15 Mexican asylum seekers to the center of the bridge and watched and prayed as they presented themselves for asylum. After a brief stand-off, the asylum seekers were allowed to enter the United States and assert their claim for asylum as is their right under law.



On street in Juarez

Mexican asylum seekers, including families, all along the border have been subject to the Trump administration’s metering policies which limit access to the asylum system. In addition, as part of the Remain in Mexico program, hundreds of Central American migrants have been returned to Ciudad Juárez from El Paso, including families, women, and children where there is a critical lack of access to shelter, food, legal aid, and basic services.

The weekend concluded with a bilingual celebration of the Eucharist after which Bishop Mark Seitz formally announced and signed his new pastoral letter, “[Night will be No More](#)” in which he addresses the issue of racism and “the false god of white supremacy.” The pastoral letter was written in memory of those who lost their lives in the August 3, 2019 massacre in El Paso.

Outstanding Leadership Award Recommendations

All LCWR regions are reminded to submit their Outstanding Leadership Award recommendations after their fall meeting. The recommendation form should be sent to Chris Beckett, SCN at cbeckett@lcwr.org.

Faith-Based Organizations Rebuke US Withdrawal from Paris Climate Agreement

On November 4, President Trump formally announced to the United Nations that he has begun the year-long process of withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement; the agreement that brought together almost 200 nations to address climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation efforts, and climate finance.

LCWR joined faith leaders from across the country in a joint statement condemning the president's action, "As the world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gases, exiting the Paris Agreement is an abdication of our moral responsibility to address climate change and protect vulnerable peoples." People of faith understand that acting to mitigate the effects of climate change is a moral imperative. "Our traditions speak to the importance of good stewardship of the resources given to us, caring for our neighbors both far and near, and respecting the sacred value of the natural world."

The Paris Agreement takes important steps towards actualizing those values, and it has been championed by people of faith around the world. In the United States, hundreds of faith-based organizations and congregations have signified their commitment to remaining in the Paris Agreement, and have invested in clean, renewable energy for their offices and houses of worship. The statement urged citizens to call on their elected officials to evidence the same care for Earth and commitment to future generations.

LCWR also issued a [statement](#) of its own which included a pledge to "continue to raise our voices against climate policies that harm Earth and its people and to advocate for climate justice."



USCCB Social Ministry Gathering Focuses on Bearing Witness

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will host its annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (CSMG) January 25-28 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC. This year's theme is *Bearing Witness: Life and Justice for All*. The Gathering is an important collaborative opportunity to bring together colleagues who work on issues impacting life and human dignity across the spectrum including maternal and child health, human trafficking, family separation, incarceration, and many more. Planners hope that this year's gathering will provide a chance to open hearts and minds and create a space to work together towards the common good.



CSMG is an annual gathering organized by the Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development in collaboration with 10 other USCCB departments and 16 national Catholic organizations. This central gathering of Catholic social ministry leaders in the US annually brings together hundreds of participants whose faith inspires them to respond to pressing current domestic and global challenges. Through opportunities for prayer, meaningful dialogue, learning, and advocacy, participants will work together as a single voice to protect the lives and dignity of all people. More information can be found [here](#).

Renewal for 2020 LCWR Membership Underway

All LCWR members are reminded to renew their 2020 membership now.

Any congregation that needs to request assistance in meeting the cost of membership is asked to contact Chris Beckett, SCN at cbeckett@lcwr.org as soon as possible. Because of the generous gifts of LCWR members, the conference has a membership assistance fund that can be used for such requests. The conference encourages any community in need to take advantage of this help.



- Statement of the Faithful Democracy Coalition calling for a restoration of the principles upon which this nation was founded and ensuring fair and just democratic systems. LCWR (10/24/19)
- Statement of support for Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) testifying to his long history working on behalf of immigrant communities. LCWR (10/25/19)
- Statement by the Interfaith Community on carbon pricing principles. LCWR (10/30/19)
- Letter to Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia urging him to reject proposed changes to the H-2A visa program that would remove oversight of worker housing, require workers to pay portions of their transportation to the job, and make them vulnerable to human trafficking. Ann Scholz, SSND (10/31/19)
- LCWR statement objecting to President Trump’s announcement to the United Nations that he has begun the year-long process of withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement. Carol Zinn, SSJ (11/4/19)
- Quote for press releases on the “Rosary Walk” in support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) appeal before the Supreme Court. Carol Zinn, SSJ (11/12/19)
- Endorsement of the Refugee Protection Act which would restore US leadership on refugee resettlement by preventing a president from setting a refugee admissions goal at a level below 95,000; mandating quarterly reports to Congress; and prioritizing for family reunification. LCWR (11/13/19)

EAD 2020 to Explore the Intersection of Climate Change and Economic Injustice

The theme for the next Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD), April 24-27, 2020, will be *Imagine! God’s Earth and People Restored*.

Around the world, the most marginalized communities disproportionately affected by hunger, poverty, and the structural history of colonialism and racism are experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis most profoundly. Women and children in these communities suffer the most.



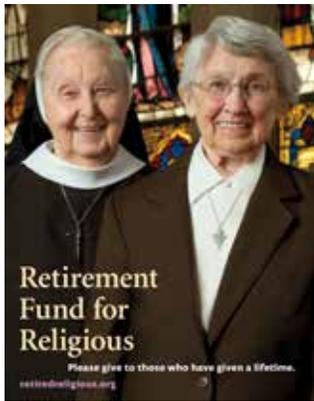
Earth and its people are groaning and calling for a hope-filled response to the crises of today. Temperatures are rising dramatically and dangerously everywhere, disrupting ecological systems and every type of human activity. The generations of tomorrow depend on what happens today.

EAD 2020 will explore the intersection of climate change and economic injustice in order to galvanize advocacy on behalf of policies and programs necessary to chip away at the systems of oppression that keep people in poverty and push all life on Earth to the brink of destruction. More information and registration materials are available [here](#).



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Updates from NRRO

The national Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held **December 7-8** in parishes across the United States. The collection underwrites all the financial assistance and resources the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) provides. Whether a religious institute receives funding or benefits from NRRO educational programming and services, all religious are asked to give the appeal vocal and prayerful support. Resources and a speaker guide may be downloaded from the NRRO [campaign materials](#) page. [Social media tools](#), including a new video, make it easy to promote the collection on an institute's social media platforms. Most importantly, NRRO asks all to pray for the success of the collection and for the donors whose generosity assists hundreds of religious institutes.

NRRO is also offering a workshop, *A Gifted Journey: Accompanying a Person Through the Dying Experience*. Scheduled for February 24-27, 2020, this new workshop offers information and practical skills for companioning someone through the end of his or her life. [More information](#) is available.



NRVC Team Leadership Model

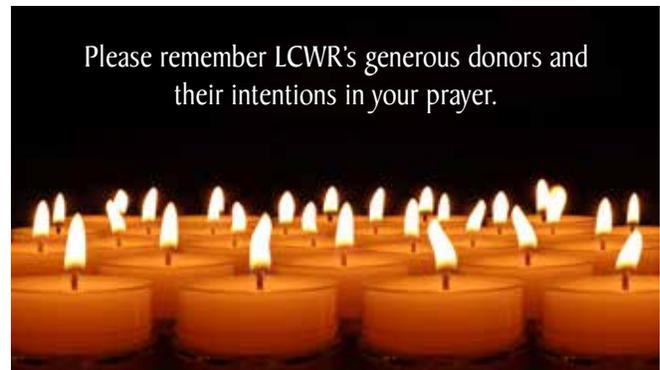
The NRVC board and national office staff gathered recently for its fall board meeting in Chicago to hear an in-depth account of the NRVC team leadership model has been working. The model is member-focused, mission-driven, accountable, and leaderful. The national office team is a strong, high-functioning, work group that trusts and challenges one another and engages directly with the members and collaborators. The board approved new fulltime job titles and position descriptions to better reflect duties and responsibilities of the NRVC office staff:

- Director of Mission Integration - Deborah Borneman, SSCM (formerly Director of Member Relations and Service)
- Director of Finance and Operations - Mrs. Maureen Cetera, (formerly Director of Finance and Human Resources)
- Director of Membership – Ms. Marge Argyelan, (formerly Database Administrator)

Phil Loftus continues to serve as the part-time director of development while also serving as the executive director of the National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations.

Membership Renewal

As the calendar year ends, NRVC extends its gratitude to its 1,018 members from 20 countries. Annual membership renewal is underway now [online](#) or by calling the NRVC Office at 773-363-5454.





Resources Available from the 2019 RFC Congress

The Religious Formation Conference has made the following resources available from its 2009 congress held in October through the links below:

[2019 Congress Digital Order Form](#)
CDs/DVDs/MP3 copies of the presentations

2019 Congress Resources

The electronic files from presenters (text of talks, power-point presentations, etc.) are available in the member section of the RFC website.

2019 Congress Picture Album

In addition to RFC's Facebook and Twitter presence, a Flickr album has been created with this year's congress photos.

2021 Congress

The next RFC Congress will be *November 4-7, 2021* in Chicago.

Advent Webinar: The Incarnation of Love

December 18 – 3:00 PM EST
Marcelline Koch, OP

Free and open to all. [Registration is required.](#)

News from the UN

December 1 --World AIDS Day has become one of the most recognized international health days and a key opportunity to raise awareness, commemorate those who have passed, and celebrate victories, such as increased access to treatment and prevention services.



December 10 — International Human Rights Day commemorates the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Disrespect for basic human rights continues to be widespread in all parts

of the globe. Extremist movements subject people to horrific violence. Messages of intolerance and hatred prey on people's fears. It is time to reaffirm the dignity and rights outlined in the Declaration.

December 18 — International Day of the Migrants marks the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and members of their families. There are more than 258 million migrants in the world today. One of every six migrants is under the age of 20.



by Joan Mumaw, IHM
President
www.solidarityfriends.org

Dear Friends,
This message is coming to you from the Solidarity Teacher Training College in Yambio, South Sudan. I am visiting the projects supported primarily by many of you, American religious women, with personnel, funding and prayer.

I cannot thank you enough for the prayers in the face of the November 12th deadline for the formation of the new government. Many aspects of the peace agreement, especially those pertaining to the formation of an integrated army and a security force to protect opposition leaders returning to Juba, have not been implemented. In addition, the number of states has not been agreed upon. At independence there were ten states. Since then 32 states have been formed through gerrymandering to favor the government and one tribe.

I honestly believe that it is through the power of prayer and the intervention of the Spirit that the hearts of leaders were softened to agree upon 100 additional days to try to iron out the difficult issues. There was a tangible sigh of relief among the people as this was announced. But fear remains as the countdown to February begins.

Thank you for your support of this important work of religious from around the world. As we approach Thanksgiving, we are grateful for each of you. The work is amazing and you will hear more about it in the future. The strength of the internet is limited and thus an extended email will have to do for now. On to the Catholic Health Training Institute next week.