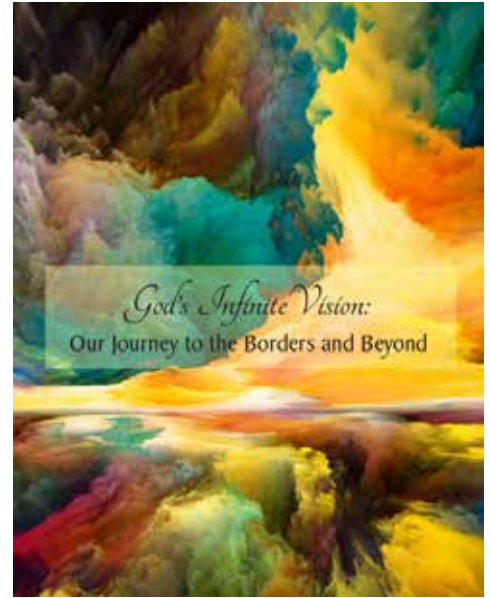


Preparing for the 2020 LCWR Assembly Reflection for the Month of July

Embracing Vulnerability in Our Service of Leadership

As we anticipate the 2020 LCWR assembly, there are many happenings laying claim to our time, attention, and energy. Both the arrival of COVID-19 and the killing of yet more African Americans at the hands of the police have rocked the fabric of our country and heightened our sense of personal and communal vulnerability. We have so many questions. How does one lead during this time loss, of physical distancing, of feeling hidden behind a cloth mask? How does one cry out for justice and maintain hope? Members have gone home to God, and we could not grieve their loss in our usual sacred ways. Our financial resources have diminished. Precious ministries, closed because of the pandemic, may not have the capacity to reopen. The many words, gestures, and virtual means we have used to support and encourage our members may feel as empty as our words denouncing the injustice laid bare by this virus. In this emptiness, how does one even begin to do both the internal and external work necessary to address and ameliorate institutional racism? There are already so many changes to religious life. Is our end being hastened? What is next? How can our feelings of being both overwhelmed and vulnerable become occasions of grace for ourselves and for the people of God whom we serve?



A woman faced with the sudden death of her husband of many years wrote a reflection, “It is only in the darkness that we can see the stars.” While darkness can heighten our anxiety about safety, if we are still, our eyes gradually adjust to the absence of light. We begin to see outlines of what surrounds us and we trust ourselves to move gradually, often slowly, to another destination. These words are a reminder not to fear darkness, but to welcome the pause it necessitates, and trust the direction that will slowly be illuminated.

... God said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ for when I am weak, then I am strong.”
(2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

“When we find ourselves in liminal space, does it matter whether we are pushed or whether we jump? Either way, we are not where or what we were before, nor do we know how or where we will land in our new reality. We are, as the anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) wrote, betwixt and between. In that space — which is mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual—we are destabilized, disoriented. The old touchstones, habits, and comforts are now past, the future unknown. We only wish such a time to be over. We may be impatient to pass through it quickly, with as little distress as possible, even though that is not likely....

“But what if we can choose to experience this liminal space and time, this uncomfortable now, as . . . a place and state of creativity, of construction and deconstruction, choice and transformation. I wonder whether it is, then, also the realm of the Holy Spirit, our comforter, who does not take away the vastness and possibility of this opened-up threshold time, but invites us to lay down our fears and discomfort to see what else is there, hard as that may be. . .” *Sheryl Fullerton, April 29, 2020 (Center for Action and Contemplation).*

Reflective Process

- Begin by listening to Carrie Newcomer's [The Beautiful Not Yet](#)
- Re-read the introduction and see if you can locate yourself in the narrative.
- Spend some time reflecting on this liminal space in which we find ourselves.
 - Read and reflect upon the words of the prophet Jeremiah
 - Read and reflect upon the words of the poet *John O'Donohue's*, [For the Interim Time](#)
 - View or listen to *A Sikh Prayer for America* by Valarie Kaur
[Audio Recording](#) (2:10); [Video Recording](#) (5:54); Printed [Text](#)

LCWR Online Contemplative Dialogue

For those who choose, several opportunities are available to engage in a contemplative dialogue with other leaders online on these questions:

In this time of personal and collective vulnerability, what do you think the world most needs from me?
From us?

How might religious life be called to change in order to be responsive to the emerging needs of all of God's creation?

Questions to Carry with Us

(not to try and answer, not to work on, just to carry with us)

In the discernment about our future, what could our world look like? What might our various expressions of religious life look like?

What is essential to religious life going forward and what simply gets in the way of our participation in the mission of God? What do we need to let go of?

In this unsettling time in which we find ourselves what is it that might be waiting to be born in you?
In us?

Am I free enough?

Closing Prayer:

In the name of the Creator, in the name of love, within us and around us, we find everlasting optimism. Within your heart, may there be grace for all of humanity. (Sikh Prayer)