

January 2008

Regions Provide Important Data on LCWR's Shared Future

In the fall, the LCWR national board asked every LCWR member to spend some time considering the matters of critical importance for religious life leaders today, as well as the role of the leadership conference in relation to those issues

Following their fall meetings 14 LCWR regions contributed collectively 41 pages of responses to three questions:

1. In the context of changing realities, what are the most significant issues, concerns or questions that we as leaders need to be exploring at this time?
2. How can we as leaders focus our collective energies to respond to these issues, concerns and questions?
3. How do we insure on-going leadership for LCWR?

Across LCWR five themes have emerged which the LCWR Shared Future Task Force identified as: future of religious life, collaboration and partnership, relationship with the church, leadership, and prophetic stance. The task force also organized the numerous responses according to each of the five themes. In addition, LCWR regions addressed five broad topics related to leadership: presidency, national board, professional staff of LCWR, congregation leadership teams, and LCWR structure.

The task force members Katie Claus, IHM; Raya Hanlon, OP; and Mary Jo Nelson, OLVM recently compiled



the feedback into a report to be shared with the LCWR national board at its February meeting. The board will determine next steps for addressing the feedback at the spring regional meetings and the national assembly in August 2008.

LCWR Represented at Vigil to Close the School of the Americas

Members of LCWR were among the many women religious participants at the 18th annual vigil to close the School of the Americas held at Fort Benning, Georgia. Shown below are LCWR members Virginia Spiegel, OSF (left) and Mary Waskowiak, RSM (right) and LCWR associate director for social mission Marie Lucey, OSF (second from left) along with other women religious. Mary Waskowiak, president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, was one of the principle speakers at the vigil.



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From the LCWR Presidency

The Potential of Honest Conversations

by Mary Whited, CPPS — LCWR President

On a chilly afternoon in mid-November between LCWR meetings and the US bishops' meeting in Baltimore, Lora Dambroski and I headed for Annapolis, Maryland, to do a bit of sightseeing. We walked the streets of this historic city unaware that within two weeks these same streets would buzz with reporters who would be covering important conversations about peace in the Middle East.



Today, as I respond to leadership responsibilities in my own congregation and LCWR, I do so with an awareness of the efforts of these women who are working for peace into the future. They remind me of how essential it is to have the conversations that mentor us into the future. Their willingness to stay in conversation when the going gets tough challenges me to difficult conversations that will chart the future of our congregations as well as our conference. Attending to the significant questions

When I opened the newspaper and saw the headlines, Israelis and Palestinians pledge to reach peace pact by end of 2008, hope stirred in me. As I prayed that peace could be realized between Palestinians and Israelis, this

that do not go away requires many hearts and minds dreaming together.

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For us as religious, the future requires that we risk talking together about what is most important to us now and how the future is unfolding in the present. We must move beyond our fear of the consequences of being honest with one another. We must find the courage to engage in the conversations that matter. One conversation can lead to another and can open the way to hope for the future.

quote from Margaret Wheatley came to mind, "It's not the differences that divide us. It's our judgments about each other that do." (*Turning to One Another*, p. 36)

Recently I was with a diverse group of people who were trying to reconcile their thinking around a very difficult issue. As we struggled with various

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The pledge at Annapolis to move toward peace stirred memorable conversations I had had with Palestinian and Israeli women during visits to the Holy Land in recent years. I had been deeply moved by the stories of these women and their honest conversation with one another about hopes for peace. These women had let go of their fears and their judgments of "the other." They were talking together about a future where healing and peace could prevail for their people. They envisioned a different reality for their children: homes for their families, freedom to go to and come from Jerusalem, the closing of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, an end to the violence and terrorism, and land they could call their own.

perspectives, I wondered, "Do our efforts here make a difference in Iraq?" In reflecting on this question, I have come to believe that, even as we engage in the difficult conversations about our lives in the here and now, we make a difference in the Middle East. Can we trust that honest conversations which shape the future of our congregations and the future of LCWR can generate lasting peace here and in the Middle East?

LCWR History Committee Explores Possible Venues for Exhibit

Four members of the LCWR History Committee, as well as six staff members of Seruto & Company, recently visited Ellis Island and the Smithsonian to discuss traveling the *Pioneers, Poets & Prophets* exhibit to these sites. Since both places expressed great interest in the exhibit, the committee will pursue applications at these two venues, while continuing to explore additional sites.



Outside of the Ellis Island museum: John Low; Anna Schlobohm; Carole Shinnick, SSND; Mellissa Berry; Barbara Cervenka, OP; Nancy Seruto; Molly Miles; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Heather Lindquist; and Helen Garvey, BVM



Touring Ellis Island with museum staff

Representatives of the LCWR History Committee and staff members of Seruto & Company meet with representatives of the Smithsonian in Washington, DC.



Plan to Order the 2008 LCWR Reflection Book, *At the Edge of Tomorrow*

LCWR will be publishing a new daily reflection book entitled, *At the Edge of Tomorrow*. The reflections in this year's book will be focused on what it takes to live courageously into an unknown future. The hope is that the book will inspire people to move forward with a sense of deep hope, a desire to be creative, a willingness to dwell with unanswered questions, and a sense of excitement about what might be ahead as religious life stands on the edge of tomorrow.

The reflections in the book are designed for use between May 31 and July 22.

LCWR members, associates, and subscribers will receive a copy of the publication. Information on ordering additional copies will be sent from the LCWR national office during the first week of January.



Catholic Groups Address Key Justice Issues

During the month of December, LCWR gathered with other Catholic groups in the Washington, DC area to engage in continued discussions and possible actions in relation to Iraq, immigration, torture, and extractive industries and water. While the groups are part of other coalitions and working groups, they believe it is important to gather also as organizations grounded in Catholic social teachings and to strategize about how to engage in outreach to the larger Catholic community.

Iraq:

Two members of the Catholics Iraq group reported on the workshop on Iraq held in conjunction with the USCCB meeting in November and which was attended by 30 bishops. A follow-up meeting with USCCB staff on international policy is scheduled. Suggestions for reaching the US Catholic community before the 2008 elections were considered, including running articles in widely read Catholic magazines, letters to the editor in Catholic newspapers, and communicating with JustFaith groups. Legislatively, NETWORK will circulate a sign-on letter to the Appropriations Committee about funding for development and reconstruction and will make lobby visits in January.

Torture:

The Catholic sub-group of NRCAT (National Religious Coalition Against Torture) met with a possible writer for development of materials for a wide Catholic audience. While Lent is an ideal time to distribute materials as people focus on the sufferings and torture of Jesus, it was determined that in order to have a longer timeline, the goal would be June, which is National Torture Awareness month. The proposal is to develop a three-part backgrounder which will include the nature of the problem in relation to “love your enemies,” Catholic social teachings, and suggestions for action.

Immigration:

Participating organizations in Justice for Immigrants provided updates on activities including educational programs offered in schools and colleges, involvement in detention issues, election guides, and National Migration Week (January 6-12, 2008) activities. One detention item was a report from the Irish Apostolate

that a number of Irish immigrants have been picked up and detained for several weeks in Boston. The USCCB reported that Cardinal Mahoney wrote a letter to presidential candidates urging them to tone down their immigrant rhetoric, Bishop Wenski is meeting with Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, and other bishops are meeting with bishops of other denominations and with congressional representatives. During the legislative session, one of the items was to encourage an early January “deep drill” of Catholic co-Sponsors of the SAVE Act, H.R. 4088, urging them to withdraw their support for this enforcement bill. The Catholic co-sponsors are 14 Democrats and 2 Republicans.

Water and Extractive Industries:

This sub-group of the Religious Working Group on Water hosted a session with Lauren Pagel from Earthworks to which all RWG members were invited. The purpose was to learn more about legislation to reform the 1872 Mining Law, the only existing mining law in the United States when there were no environmental standards. It was one of three acts dealing with the opening of the West and affects 350 million acres of public land which now includes national parks and tribal lands. Some of the consequences of mining are: polluted drinking water, loss of fish and wildlife, contaminated soils, taxpayer liabilities, and health risks. Open pit mines wreak havoc on earth and communities. While the necessity for reform seems obvious, and the House voted to move legislation on November 1, there is resistance in the Senate led by Majority Leader Harry Reid, (D-NV) from a mining state. (Senator Obama has also opposed the House bill, HR 2262.) The Senate is expected to have a piece of legislation in January.



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LCWR Engages New Cartridge Recycling Company

LCWR recently switched to working with Empties4cash for its cartridge recycling program. This program not only aids the environment, but also assists LCWR members who need financial assistance to attend the LCWR assembly. All money received from this effort is placed in the LCWR scholarship fund.

Labels that were sent from the entity with which LCWR previously partnered, The Inkjet Collect Company, can be discarded. Inkjet Collect was not able to provide LCWR a service that met its recycling needs.

New supplies may be ordered from the LCWR national office by contacting Carol Glidden at cglidden@lcsr.org or by calling 301-588-4955. Participants must provide a contact name, e-mail, phone number, and address.



- LCWR signed on to a letter to Congress urging support for the Water for the World Resolution, endorsed earlier by LCWR
- Letter to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon about the continued occupation of East Timor prior to his first visit to that country.
- LCWR sent a letter to Brazilian Federal Supreme Court Minister Cesar Peluso asking that the case of one of the instigators of the murder of Dorothy Stang, SNDdeNamur rancher Regivaldo Pereira Galvao, be heard in Belem, Para. The Conference of Brazilian Religious and the Sisters of Notre Dame deNamur in Brazil fear that Regivaldo's attorneys will succeed in having the Supreme Court dismiss the case.



LCWR Offers Workshop for New and Returning Leaders

March 13 - 16, 2008
Plymouth, Michigan

Outstanding Faculty

Simone Campbell, SSS | Lynn Jarrell, OSU | Lynn M. Levo, CSJ
Hertha Longo, CSA | Mira Mosle, BVM | Nancy Schreck, OSF

A few spaces are still available for this excellent workshop. If you haven't already registered and are interested in attending, contact Carol Glidden at 301-588-4955.

The registration form is available on the LCWR website at www.lcsr.org/lcsrprogramsresources/NLWFlyer08.pdf.

From the LCWR Executive Director

The Year of Tender Places

There is something about January that evokes a sense of “getting back to business.” This coming Sunday three kings will visit the manger, quickly followed next Sunday by the baptism of the 30-year old Jesus. Then off he goes, into a public life. My goodness, that was fast!

The ornaments and wrapping paper have been put away for another year. The advertisements from Target and K-Mart feature sales on large storage containers meant to eliminate clutter thus bringing order to our lives. And our friends at Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers offer us discounted memberships to assist with that most familiar of New Years’ resolutions. Yes, January is definitely a time to pull up our socks and to get back on track.

Looking towards the annual ritual of resolution making, I am conscious of some fictional characters that have drawn me into their worlds over the holidays. While driving north to visit my family in New England, I listened to a gently engaging audio version of *The Secret Life of Bees*. Then after Christmas I went out with friends to see two films currently playing in theaters – *The Kite Runner* and *Atonement*. Each of these stories is set in vastly different cultures and times. But what is strikingly similar about them is that in each case the central character struggles with the conviction – real or imagined – that she or he committed an unforgivable childhood sin.

In *The Secret Life of Bees*, 14-year old Lily Melissa Owens believes that when she was four she accidentally killed her mother in an effort to save her from an abusive husband. Amir, the narrator of *The Kite Runner* is profoundly shamed by the knowledge that he witnessed - but did not attempt to stop - a brutal attack on his loyal childhood friend, Hassan. And in *Atonement*, the adult Briony Tallis is haunted by an enormous lie she told at 13 that set in motion a series of calamities in the lives of two other people.

As the stories unfold, the protagonists seek relief from their secret burdens. They flee them. They bury



Carole Shinnick, SSND

them. They deny them. They shape their lives to overcome them. But of course, nothing works. It is only when each one finds a safe space, a trusted person, and a restorative action that their terrible loads are lifted. In the end, all must discover ways to make – as the film title suggests – atonement. They must name for themselves and to someone else, the heavy heartaches they carry. Most of all, they must forgive their child-selves for acting as children – limited in understanding, immature in judgment, and self-protective by instinct.

I’m not sure who coined the term “walking wounded” but these fictional characters remind me of a real life truth – we are all among the walking wounded. The persons we are today – our loves and our lapses, our dreams and our demons – are rooted in our singular stories. Our co-workers and our communities, our families and friends - and we - are all both wondrously

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resilient and quietly damaged. Like Lily, Amir, and Briony, we walk bravely ahead secretly seeking the safe place, the kind listener, the redemptive opportunity. We long for these things even as we are called to provide them for one another.

So, perhaps this is the year to attend to the tender places. Perhaps this is the year for the everyday sacrament of reconciliation. Perhaps this is the year when our little efforts to name our truths and hear one another’s stories will touch our broken world. And, perhaps this is the year when our New Year’s resolutions need to be more about seeing with compassion and less about superficial (and inevitably impermanent) change.

Whatever 2008 holds for us, let us walk towards it together – holding each others’ hands so that what we carry alone will be lighter for our companionship. A blessed New Year to you.

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*Redemptorist Renewal Center
Tucson, Arizona*
January 20 — 25, 2008

Systemic Change Think Tank

*Franciscan Renewal Center
Scottsdale, Arizona*
February 4 — 7, 2008

LCWR New Leader Workshop

*The Retreat Center at St. John's
Plymouth, Michigan*
March 13 — 16, 2008

LCWR-CMSM Joint Assembly

Denver, Colorado
August 1 — 4, 2008

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*Franciscan Center
Tampa, Florida*
January 12 — 16, 2009

LCWR New Leader Workshop

*The Retreat Center at St. John's
Plymouth, Michigan*
March 19 — 22, 2009

LCWR Assembly

New Orleans, Louisiana
August 11 — 15, 2009

From the Center for the Study of Religious Life

Generational Cultures

The Center for the Study of Religious Life is working with Patricia Wittberg, SC to produce a CD with two PowerPoint presentations on generational culture to be used for discussion within religious congregations. The first presentation explores the concept of culture in general and generational cultural differences in the United States in particular. The second one focuses on Millennials and Generation X. In addition to the two PowerPoints, the CD will have a few exercises on generational culture (adapted from the Cultural Audit) for leadership teams, living groups, or others to use as well as some bibliography.

CSRL member institutes will receive copies of the CD when they are ready.

Research Link-of-the-Month

The Association for Religion Data Archives (ARDA) www.thearda.com

ARDA collected the data from various recent religion surveys and studies and made it available to the general public on their web site. At first the site was targeted at researchers, but now there are features of interest to educators, journalists, and various religious communities. The Lilly Endowment, Inc., the John Templeton Foundation, and the Pennsylvania State University fund it.

The information available includes maps of Catholics by state or nationally, results of questions asked in various surveys searched by keyword (e.g. celibacy), and the data from complete studies such as the FORUS study (www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/ROSS.asp).

There is so much material available at ARDA it can be overwhelming. There are nine tabs across the top of the home page. One might start with "Maps and Reports," "Quick Stats," or "Learning Modules." There is a search box in the upper right corner into which one can type a keyword and the webpage will show what the site has on that topic.

Updates from the National Religious Vocation Conference

CARA Study on Contemporary Vocational Trends to Religious Life to Commence

NRVC is pleased to announce that it has recently obtained from an anonymous donor a \$64,300 grant to research contemporary vocation trends of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life in the United States. The purpose of this study, as outlined in the NRVC Five Year Strategic Plan approved by the NRVC national board in 2003, is to assist institutes and societies in their efforts to attract and to retain new members. This project will be done through the Center for Applied Research to the Apostolate (CARA) and will consist of three phases:

1. Surveys to major superiors and to those who entered religious life in the past 10 years;
2. Onsite visits to those “successful” religious institutes who attract and retain new members;
3. Focus groups of young religious from around the country.

This is exciting news for NRVC and for religious institutes in the United States. While much has been written recently on current trends to religious life, much of the literature is anecdotal evidence. With this comprehensive study, religious institutes will finally have the statistical information and analysis that will hopefully inform religious leadership as they develop their own vocation plans for the future.

Young Adult Section Added to NRVC Website

The NRVC Young Adult Committee recently developed an online young adult resource for its members. The purpose of this new feature on the NRVC website is to provide a “best practices” toolbox of ideas on how to create, cultivate and consolidate interest in a religious institute beyond preliminary visits or retreats. Young adults seem to be seeking more in-depth, “hands on” experiences in their pursuit of a deeper spirituality and vocational expression. Hopefully, this resource will serve those who would like to establish a long or short term or on-going discernment program within their own institute.

Media Network Forming

Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, NRVC executive director, Charlene Diorka, SSJ, associate director, and Patrice Tuohy, executive director of TrueQuest Communications met with Paula Waters, senior vice president and senior partner of Fleishman Hillard International Communications in Chicago.

The group began developing a media and communications network to promote a positive image of religious life and priesthood, with the goal of forming a larger committee of professionals for this purpose. Ms. Waters will also present a pre-convocation workshop at the NRVC Convocation in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 9, 2008. The title of the workshop is Marketing the Call: Marketing and Media 101 for Vocation Ministry.”



Paul Bednarczyk, CSC; Paula Waters; Patrice Tuohy; and Charlene Diorka, SSJ

Vocation Program to Train Catholic School Leaders

NRVC’s Education Committee is launching a pilot program to train principals and superintendents to promote vocation education in Catholic elementary schools and high schools. The program will be launched in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Dioceses of Mobile, Alabama, and Arlington, Virginia.

In addition to the training — which will include practical suggestions on how to invite young people to religious life — participants will receive a brochure with vocation vocabulary and frequently asked questions. “This is all part of creating a vocation culture,” explains Mary Beth Kubera, DC, committee chair. “Teachers often report comfort in speaking about the married and single life, but they have less comfort with religious life and priesthood.” This program has been underwritten by a private grant.

Religious Formation Conference Vision to Include Lifelong Formation of Congregational Members

The Religious Formation Conference recently unveiled a newly articulated vision statement to guide the work of the conference for the next five years. While RFC will continue to provide professional assistance to those in the ministry of initial formation, the new statement emphasizes the organization's parallel commitment to life-long transformative learning.

As a result of its new statement, RFC will be offering a variety of resources focused on ongoing formation. This will be of particular service to leaders of religious institutes who will be able to draw on RFC for assistance and guidance.

The new RFC vision statement is available at the conference's website at: relforcon.org/Mission-Vision-Goals.pdf

LRCR Workshop Registration Closed

Registration for "Reconfiguration Best Practices: Civilly, Canonically, Culturally," a workshop being given by the Legal Resource Center for Religious, is closed. The workshop, which will be held in February in San Antonio, Texas, received an excellent response, and now cannot accept any new registrations.

LRCR plans to hold another workshop in the near future and will notify members of the new date. Anyone who has questions may contact Pat Nash, LRCR administrative assistant at pnash@lrcr.org - 301-589-8143.

RFC Congress Materials Available

Videotapes, audiotapes and written transcripts of the keynote speakers and seminar presenters at RFC's national congress are available for individuals and congregations that would like to use them as resources for further reflection and discussion.

The theme of the Congress, "Compelled by the Spirit to Be fire," was enlivened by the keynote speakers as Carol Zinn, SSJ, challenged religious to attend to the needs of the world, Fintan Sheeran, SSCC, reflected on a changing Church, and David Blanchard, O Carm., called for transformation in religious life.

Seminars included Forming for a Prophetic Way of Life," with Luisa M. Saffiotti; Attending Psycho-Sexual Development in the Formative Process, with Quinn Connors, O Carm.; The Future of Religious Life, with Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; Formative Communities: Challenging our Death Wish, with Don Bisson, FMS; Compelled by the Spirit of Church Law to Liberate, with Lynn Jarrell, OSU; and Integrating an Ecological Perspective within the Formative Process, with Lyn Szymkiewicz, CSJ.

More information is available on the website, at www.relforcon.org, or by contacting the RFC office at relforcon@relforcon.org