

November 2007

## LCWR and CMSM Plan for Joint Assembly in Denver: 'On This Holy Mountain'

In 2008, LCWR and CMSM will hold a joint assembly in Denver that will feature three outstanding keynoters and opportunities for the two conferences to explore important questions facing religious life leaders today.

The joint assembly planning committee met at the assembly site, the Adam's Mark Hotel in Denver (the mile-high city) in September to plan the specifics of the event. Noting that in scriptural stories the ascent of a mountain is often both a sacred and a transformative moment, the committee chose "On This Holy Mountain" as the assembly title.

Keynoters who will break open the theme during the August 1 - 4 assembly are:

- **Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ:** professor at Fordham University and author
- **Gary Riebe Estrella, SVD:** professor, vice-president and academic dean at Catholic Theological Union
- **Richard Rohr, OFM:** founder of the New Jerusalem Community and founding director of the Center for Action and Contemplation

Both LCWR and CMSM will have several opportunities to meet separately in order to conduct business and discuss issues pertinent to their respective conferences.



*At the 2008 LCWR-CMSM assembly planning meeting were: (back) Paul Coury, CSsR; Paul Lininger, OFM Conv; Carole Shinnick, SSND; Susan Swain, SL; (front) Molly Hackett (of Nix and Associates); Pat Cormack, SCSC; Timothy McMahon, SJ; Susan Hadzima, IHM; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Peter Damian Massengill, OFM Conv; Pat Rayburn, OSF; and John Steingraeber, CSsR.*

Additional information will be made available to all members about several pre-assembly events, including workshops and travel opportunities. All LCWR members are encouraged to mark their calendars now and to plan on sending as many team members as possible to this important event.

### Inside this issue:

- 3 LCWR Meets with Iranian President
- 3 Register for LCWR New Leader Workshop
- 4 NRRO Plans for Future Use of Funds

*From the LCWR Presidency*

## When Giant Bunkers Try to Block Our View

by Mary Dacey, SSJ — LCWR Past President

Our retreat house is located at the very tip of New Jersey at a place aptly called Cape May Point. Originally an elaborate hotel built just before the turn of the century (the 20th century that is), it was sold to the Sisters of Saint Joseph in 1909. From 1941 to 1946 the house was leased to the government as an outlook post to warn against possible invasion. After the war the house was returned to us, but swimming was prohibited for about 60 years because of mines that had been placed offshore.



situations throughout our world where violence, terrorism, and oppression are still seen as viable options.

Call me corny, but something nudged me out of my sadness. If I looked up and I looked carefully as I passed the bunker, I could see something at odds with the scene. It was grass or some kind of plant that had somehow managed to grow and to spread and yes, even to hang out some of the windows. And it was a wonderful green color! I realize, of course, that moss or dune

grass was probably a camouflage to disguise the bunker when it was first constructed. But what amazed and delighted me was the realization that even as this cold, concrete structure managed to survive in the face of storms and water erosion, so too did this glimmer of life.

And I thought of all the prayers, by all the retreatants, over all the years since that bunker had been built. And I realized that they were not for nothing...and that God can bring the promise of life out of the most unexpected places...and that maybe hope grows best when giant bunkers try to block our view.

Today, not far from the house is a hulking landmark that rises above the surrounding beach and dunes, a remnant of times past when the United States Army occupied our retreat house. It is a bunker from World War II. I suppose it was built as a shelter for the troops in the event of an attack. If I were more astute at estimating,

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unexpected places*

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I could give you an idea of its size. Suffice it to say, it is huge. There is no way to walk the beach, even in your most contemplative mode, and not be taken with it. Washed by the salt water these many years, it is an ugly "no color" of faded shades. At the top are small windows, most likely for lookouts and perhaps, for guns.

A house of prayer and a fortress for war! This past summer I was on retreat at the Cape. As I walked the beach each day, I could not help wondering at the strange juxtaposition. And it made me sad. Over 60 years and several wars later, we still deal with the bunker mentality that fighting is a viable response for the human condition. Worse still, at times we have been the aggressor under the guise of protecting ourselves and others. Prayer can seem mighty powerless in the face of that bunker or, for that matter, in the face of so many



## LCWR Represented at Dialogue with President of Iran in New York City

LCWR executive director Carole Shinnick, SSND, along with other North American religious leaders from a variety of faiths, met with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in New York City on September 26. The meeting focused on improving East-West relations through informal diplomacy.

President Ahmadinejad, visiting New York to attend the United Nations 62nd General Assembly session, sat down with a delegation of US religious leaders for the third time in the past year. The first meeting took place last year, also at the UN, followed by a February 2007 visit to Iran by US religious leaders at the invitation of the Iranian president, who received them at the presidential palace, the first US citizens to be welcomed there in more than 25 years.

These dialogues have included frank discussions on the Holocaust, nuclear weapons, the role of religion in peacemaking, Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the use of hostile rhetoric.

Pax Christi USA organized the approximately 140-member delegation which travelled to New York and included theologians, clergy and religious, and leaders of national Catholic organizations. The meeting with President Ahmadinejad, hosted by the Mennonite Central Committee, took place amidst heightened security at the Church Center at the UN. It was described by a *New York Times* article the following day as "a friendly, even warm, exchange."

*(continued on page 6)*



*Carole Shinnick, SSND represented LCWR at a meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the Church Center at the UN. (Photo by Melissa Engle of the Mennonite Central Committee.)*



The Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
presents

The

## New Leader Workshop

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

LCWR is pleased to announce the  
2008 New Leader Workshop.

This annual event, tailored for women religious in congregational leadership, is highly recommended not only for those who may be new to leadership, but also for those who are returning to leadership.

The program features an outstanding faculty and presentations on issues of critical importance to leaders today.

Participants will have multiple opportunities to consider ways of employing their new insights once they return home.

The program will draw its major themes from the LCWR document, *The Dimensions of Leadership*, and will incorporate prayer and ritual throughout.

Faculty:

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

The registration form was sent online to all members and is available on the LCWR website at

[www.lcwr.org/lcwrprogramsresources/NLWFlyer08.pdf](http://www.lcwr.org/lcwrprogramsresources/NLWFlyer08.pdf).

Forms and payment are due by December 7.

Participation is limited.



*Participants in the NRRO consultation held in Baltimore*



*Sandra Schnieders, IHM*



*Mary Johnson, SNDdeN*



*Hertha Longo, CSA*

## NRRO Plans for Future Use of Donated Funds

From October 7 - 9, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) hosted a multi-disciplinary gathering of consultants at the Maritime Conference Center at the Thurgood Marshall BWI Airport. The purpose for the gathering was to plan how the funds donated each year through the NRRO annual collection could be used most wisely. The collection, which was to sunset in 2007, was renewed for another 10 years by the United States Catholic Bishops' Conference in June 2005.

Janice Bader, CPPS and Hank Sammon, FMS from the NRRO office hosted the event, which was originally organized and convened by Andree Fries, CPPS, the late NRRO executive director.

Although the collection is the most successful collection in the US Catholic Church, the amount collected can never replenish the losses estimated by the total unfunded liability of congregations of religious men and women in the United States. Therefore, the NRRO and its management board, composed of the general secretaries of the USCCB and CMSWR, and the executive directors of LCWR and CMSM, determined that an increased portion of the funds collected would be used for systemic change in congregational practices as well as for direct donations.

The consultation was facilitated by Paul Michalenko, ST and included sociologists Mary Bendyna, RSM (CARA);

Mary Johnson, SNDdeN (Emmanuel College); and David Couturier, OFM, Cap (St. Mary's Seminary); and financial consultants included Hertha Longo, CSA (Sisters of St. Agnes treasurer and chair of NATRI board) and Barbara Matteson, OP, (NATRI). Jean Bartunek, RSCJ, professor from Boston

College's School of Business, brought organizational design to the conversation. Ruby Cribbins, a facilitator with wide experience working with religious congregations and congregational mergers brought her perspective, and Sandra Schnieders, IHM offered theological insights into the future of religious life.

Also in attendance were representatives of three of the four managing organizations: Paul Henderson of the USCCB; Paul Lininger, OFM, Conv. of CMSM; and Carole Shinnick, SSND of LCWR. Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP served as both contributor and secretary for the gathering.

The rich conversation and significant recommendations will be reviewed and integrated into the long-range planning of the NRRO.



## November 1: Deadline for Becoming an LCWR Member

**D**ues for membership in LCWR must be in the LCWR national office by November 1, 2007. LCWR membership covers one calendar year, from January 1 to December 31. The dues structure for LCWR membership is based on congregational census. Each congregation and/or congregational unit is assessed based on its census as of October 1, 2007. Membership forms are available on the LCWR website at: [www.lcwr.org/lcwraboutus/membership.htm](http://www.lcwr.org/lcwraboutus/membership.htm).

Members are asked to submit only one form per congregational unit. With payment of dues, each member of a council becomes a national LCWR member.

Also available on the LCWR website is the form for LCWR associate membership.



## November 9 Deadline for Applying for LCWR Executive Director

**A**pplications are being accepted for the position of LCWR executive director. A job description and application are available on the LCWR website at: [www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/ED.htm](http://www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/ED.htm).

The preferred start date for this position is mid-July 2008. Applications must be submitted by November 9.

## Registrations Due for Systemic Change Think Tank

**R**egistrations for the LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank are due to the LCWR national office by December 1, 2007. Titled "Earth as Teacher: The Dynamics of Emergent Processes," Think Tank X will be held at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, February 4-7, 2008, with Paula Gonzalez, SC, leading the process. LCWR think tanks are open to LCWR members, justice/peace/environment staff, and communications staff. Fliers have been sent to all LCWR members and justice and peace staff contacts. To receive a registration flyer and form, contact Carol Glidden ([cglidden@lcwr.org](mailto:cglidden@lcwr.org)).

## CHA Board Visits Christus Health in Mexico

**F**or the past several years, the Catholic Health Association (CHA) board has held its September meeting in a location that provides an opportunity to visit the health ministry of a participating health system. This year's meeting was hosted by Christus Health System in Monterrey, Mexico, where board members had the opportunity to learn about health care in Mexico and visit two Christus hospitals as well as one clinic in a very poor neighborhood. All the Mexico facilities are managed and staffed by Mexican personnel who are strongly committed to and enthusiastic about health care ministry. The work being accomplished in a relatively small clinic was particularly impressive.

During the business meeting, CHA staff reports included SCHIP legislative activity; emergency contraception challenges; collaboration with Catholics with Disabilities on development of a policy on futile care; and the successful, over-subscribed sponsorship workshop preceding the LCWR assembly. Board members also expressed heartfelt congratulations to Carol Keehan, DC, CHA's president and CEO for being named by *Modern Healthcare* the most powerful person in health care this year, the first woman and first bedside nurse to be so named.



LCWR associate director for social mission Marie Lucey, OSF (right) with Sheila Kinsey, OSF and Rev. David Duncombe, who on October 16 on Capitol Hill ended a 40-day fast for debt cancellation

## ‘Cancel Debt Fast’ Ends with Prayer Breakfast on Capitol Hill

When Rev. David Duncombe, a UCC minister from Washington State, ended his 40-day fast on October 16 with a break-fast on Capitol Hill, he was joined by four members of Congress breaking their fast, representatives from the USCCB, American Jewish World Service, World Council of Churches, Bread for the World, the Tanzanian ambassador to the US, several other notable persons, and 100 Jubilee activists from across the country, including a representative from LCWR. The fast resulted in securing a commitment to a fall hearing on the Jubilee Act in the House Financial Services Committee and gaining 13 additional House bill sponsors.

A press release issued by Jubilee USA named as one of the four highlights of the fast the fact that more than 8,000 women religious from 150 institutes fasted for one or more days. The participation of LCWR member congregations was greatly appreciated by the organizers of the rolling fast, and was evidence of LCWR’s commitment to the assembly 2007 resolution on the Sabbath year fast and advocacy for debt cancellation for impoverished countries. On October 17, Jubilee activists spent the day visiting their senators, urging them to co-sponsor a Senate version of the Jubilee Act.

## LCWR Represented at Dialogue with President of Iran in New York City

*(continued from page 3)*

“It was an honor to be invited to be part of the Catholic delegation at this important interfaith event,” noted Carole Shinnick. “It was a clear and concrete witness to civil discourse rather than demonization, to dialogue rather than threats.”

The Catholic organizations that took part in the delegation later issued a statement on the meeting that can be found on the LCWR website at: [www.lcwr.org/lcwrpressreleases/publicstatements/Iranianpresident9-26-07.doc](http://www.lcwr.org/lcwrpressreleases/publicstatements/Iranianpresident9-26-07.doc)

“Our message today, both in our words and by our actions, is that our country and our political leaders need to engage Iran in respectful and meaningful dialogue in order to overcome the historical enmity that has existed between our two nations,” said Dave Robinson, Pax Christi USA executive director. “We need our leaders to put aside the threats of war and to engage now—to have what President Ahmadinejad asked for today: sincere and fair negotiations.”

Jean Stokan, Pax Christi USA policy director, stated that now is the time for US citizens to start encouraging their elected officials to push for a policy of negotiation with Iran.

“It is our responsibility—the responsibility of people of faith in the US — to work now to assure that the Bush Administration chooses a diplomatic path, not a military one, in dealing with our differences with Iran. The alternative is simply unacceptable.”

## LCWR Leading from Within Retreats

Registration is closed for the 2008 Leading from Within Retreat. The retreat is filled to capacity and there is already a waiting list. Anyone interested in making this retreat is asked to note the dates for the 2009 retreat (January 12 - 16) and to watch for registration information in summer 2008.

*From the LCWR Executive Director*

## One Oak at a Time

There is a lovely short story written by French author, poet, and playwright Jean Giono entitled *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Giono originally wrote the story in 1956 and submitted it to *Readers Digest* to be published in the regular *Digest* feature, "The Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met." The editors rejected the story because it was fictional, but the story itself was so compelling that it was widely published, shared, and translated from French into many other languages. The story was brought to life in a glorious film, *The Man Who Planted Trees*, which won the Academy Award for best animated short in 1987.\*



**Carole Shinnick, SSND**

unseen, steady work of Bouffier gradually has transformed barren land into lush, healthy terrain. Its residents, too, are changed from violent, bitter people vying for the meager resources of the area into a blessed and contented people. All is changed because of the quiet ministry of a humble peasant with a divine dream.

Reading the story today or viewing the film, one thinks of real life Bouffiers – Wangari Maathai, recipient of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her work in reforesting the barren plains of Kenya. We recall Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, martyred in Brazil in 2005 for her work there for agrarian reform and protection of the rainforest against destructive lumbering practices.

Transformation, it seems, is not just about personal change. Rather it is a dialogue, a dynamic interplay between the individual and the universe. The small changes we make in response to grace pass through us like sunlight through a lens, bringing about unimaginable (and usually unrecognized) transformations in our world and ourselves. And the very expressions of grace continue to transform us – if we don't spend a lot of time looking for outcomes.

Ours is not to measure the effectiveness of our own efforts. In fact, self-consciousness seems to intrude on grace. Our call, like that of Elzéard Bouffier, is to spend our evenings counting out 100 perfect acorns and rising each morning to plant them. Ours is to know that society's measures of success are meaningless when viewed through the eyes of the Divine Dreamer. Ours is to be willing to invest in a future we may never see. And ours is to know that letting go of results draws us into the dance of transformation – wild, free, and open. With Elzéard. With Wangari. With Dorothy. Amen.

*\*The text of the story is readily available on the internet including at [home.infomaniak.ch/~arboretum/man\\_tree.htm](http://home.infomaniak.ch/~arboretum/man_tree.htm). The film is also available through multiple media distribution sites on the internet in both VHS and DVD format. See a clip of the film at [www.videoproject.com/man-840-v.htm](http://www.videoproject.com/man-840-v.htm).*

The story centers on a shepherd, Elzéard Bouffier, who having tragically lost his wife and young son, retreats to a remote area of France to live quietly alone. He is encountered by the story's narrator just before World War I. Elzéard Bouffier, it seems, has decided to give his life to planting trees in the barren, scarred, deforested

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*... ours is to know that letting go of results  
draws us into the dance of transformation  
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valley where he resides. Each evening, he selects 100 perfect acorns, soaks them overnight, and the next day goes out and plants 100 oak trees. He does this day after day – unrecognized, unthanked, and deeply committed to his chosen work.

When the narrator encounters Bouffier the first time, the shepherd tells him that he has already planted 100,000 trees. And the narrator adds: "Of the hundred thousand, twenty thousand had sprouted. Of the twenty thousand he still expected to lose about half, to rodents or to the unpredictable designs of Providence. There remained ten thousand oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before." From the shepherd's point of view, the survival of one tenth of his hard labor seems like excellent returns.

The story continues through two world wars and periodic visits by the narrator. By the end of his life, the

## Upcoming LCWR Dates **Justice for Immigrants Regroups**

### 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

During the Justice for Immigrants (JFI) core member meeting on October 10 participants discussed the future of JFI given the defeat of comprehensive immigration reform in the Congress. Members agreed that while passage of a just law is still a desired goal, education of Catholics and transformation of anti-immigrant attitudes is also essential. Many are particularly concerned about detention centers and increasing number of raids. The group will now meet monthly in order to strategize about an education focus. A small group will work on a media strategy, paying close attention to messaging, keeping Catholic social teachings core while using different language for different groups within the Catholic community.

## LCWR Advocates for Children ... and More

Many LCWR members and congregations have added their voices to those of CHA, NETWORK, Catholic Charities, Coalition for Human Needs and others to urge their Representatives in Congress to override the President's veto of the State Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (SCHIP) (HR 976).

LCWR also signed on to a letter to members of Congress in support of the Child Support Protection Act of 2007 (HR 1386, S803) which would restore federal matching funds that were cut by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 and allow state child support agencies to maintain their level of performance to ensure that parents support their children. Delivered on October 4, the letter was signed by 527 organizations, both national and regional/local. In addition to the national office, a number of LCWR congregations also signed the letter initiated by the Women's Law Center.

In response to a second Assembly 2007 Resolution on preserving US wetlands and coastlands, members were also encouraged to urge their senators to support The Gulf Coast Recovery Act of 2007 (S 1668). Catholic Charities of New Orleans was among those who testified at a senate hearing during the last week in September.



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From the  
**Center for the Study of  
Religious Life**

### Free CSRL Book at RFC Congress

Anyone attending the RFC Congress November 8-11 is invited to come to the center's exhibit (Booth # 19). The first 100 people will receive a free copy of *Becoming a Religious: A process of lifelong transformation*. CSRL director, Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ, will be a workshop speaker at the congress.

### Interdisciplinary Reflection from CSRL's Scholars Roundtable

Four members of CSRL's Scholars Roundtable, William Barry, SJ; Kathleen Sprows Cummings; Katarina Schuth, OSF; and Patricia Wittberg, SC, reflected together on topics they believe to be important for leaders today. They have written a collective essay from their reflection, "Finding a Way Forward: Thoughts for Religious Leaders."

The essay is being sent to all current CSRL members. For more information, write to [csrl@religious-life.org](mailto:csrl@religious-life.org)

### Research Link-of-the-Month

UCLA Study on Religion on American Campuses, "God and Grades," [www.magazine.ucla.edu](http://www.magazine.ucla.edu).

A national survey of 112,000 entering freshmen in 2004 with an analysis of the same students as juniors this past spring will be published this fall. Conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute of UCLA, a follow-up to their first study "Spirituality in Higher Education Study" in 2003 which found strong levels of spirituality among college students across the country.

## Upcoming LRCR Workshop San Antonio, Texas

More details available at [www.lrcr.org](http://www.lrcr.org)

### RECONFIGURATION BEST PRACTICES: Civily, Canonically, Culturally

February 11-13, 2008  
Hilton San Antonio Airport

#### Faculty:

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Stephen Glodek, SM  
Lynn Jarrell, OSU, JCD  
Mark MacDougall, JD  
Mary Reichert, JD  
Daniel Ward, OSB, JD, JCL

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