

February 2010

## Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America Opens at the Smithsonian



LCWR realized a long-anticipated goal on January 14, when *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* opened at the Smithsonian's S. Dillon Ripley Center in Washington, DC. The Smithsonian will host the exhibit in its International Gallery until April 25.

Nearly 300 invited guests attended the opening reception where they heard from the staff of Seruto & Company and the Smithsonian about the impact this exhibit has had on their own personal and professional lives. LCWR members Mary Waskowiak, RSM; Marge Perron, RJM; and Susan Schorsten, HM; with the assistance of Stephanie Heiland, external communications manager of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, worked with the LCWR History Committee and national office staff, plus many local volunteers to coordinate and fundraise for the opening reception and oversee all public relations efforts. The team has also planned two events to take place in conjunction with the exhibit.

On February 24 from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM, a free public program, "Women in Education: Continuing the Legacy" will be presented at the S. Dillon Ripley Center's

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## LCWR Stands in Solidarity with the People of Haiti

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious has been in contact with numerous congregations with members living in Haiti, as well as with organizations working to be of assistance in the recovery efforts following the January 12 earthquake.

To assist the women religious of the United States to gain a better understanding of the needs of the sisters in Haiti and the people they serve, LCWR sent an online survey to all major superiors. The survey asks congregations to indicate if they have members living in Haiti, if any sisters or staff have died or have been injured, if any buildings were destroyed or damaged, and if they have sent members to assist with the relief work. The survey also asks if congregations have established a fund for their mission in Haiti and if they have an electronic networking system in place to continue to share stories about the needs and realities of Haiti at this time.

At the time of publication of this newsletter, 185 congregations had responded to the survey. As more complete information becomes available, it will be shared with all LCWR members and associates.

*From the LCWR Presidency*

## Lenten Focus: Prayer - Fasting - Almsgiving

by J Lora Dambroski, OSF — LCWR Past President

On the verge of entering a new liturgical season, Lent, and Ash Wednesday, its initiating day of focus for the weeks to come, we cannot help but hear the call to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These challenges bring us back to God at our center, our willingness to let go of those things that bind us in un-freedoms and our call to a communal focus of the needs of others. It's that continuing call to a deeper conversation of heart, mind, and action.



There is so much of personal and communal attention that is called for in this life of conversion, our life as women religious committed to the Gospel of Jesus. It seems, though, there is so much that calls for our attention! And, for us to do something!

### Attention, Presence and Response

These were some of the thoughts that I started with for this February Update column. But, it is January and I am in the midst of a new reality that is calling for attention. There are many of us here in Washington, DC, for the opening of the *Women & Spirit* exhibit. This is a call for presence. Have we opened this exhibit before? Yes. Yet is it a new experience? Yes. Do I have particularly "something to do" at this third opening of the exhibit — Cincinnati and Dallas preceding this one? No. Do I need to *be* here? Yes. Presence.

In the midst of the final days of preparation for this event the horrific earthquake has hit Haiti, killing so many people and devastating (again) the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The contrast is mind- and spirit-boggling setting up conflicting emotional impact for many.

The experience has immediately drawn human and aid responses worldwide. Every form of media is reporting the devastation. E-mails from every organization and information source have called for a response. Help. There has been a call for presence and assistance, a response to the cries, "Help them. Help us!" We need medical personnel, medical aid, volunteers, money,

refugee protection through Temporary Protected Status provided from the US government (and others, if possible), protection from the continuing devastation... These are the "things" that are needed. We know what to do and how to support one another if we could only coordinate the efforts.

### Presence ... Response

But, sometimes along with the doing it is also the "being there," the understanding, the emotional support, the whole personal presence, the human suffering beyond the pale acknowledged that is also needed. We hurt because our sisters and brothers are hurting. This is not just another news story. Can we see and feel the hurt and the pleading in their eyes?

For us, this is a call to *presence* with the Body of Christ that is suffering it seems without relief. We are stretched to do what we can and more than we can to support those who are there responding... Catholic Relief Services, Partners in Progress, many of our sisters and brothers from our own religious congregations, as well as other religious workers, volunteers, and military aid personnel.

### Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving

This is a new Lent, reinterpreting the traditional focuses for us. It is our Lenten prayer for Haiti, our Lenten fasting, letting go of some of what we have to share with others, and the Lenten giving of our voice to the call for relief for Haiti, this suffering part of the Body of Christ. Our comfortable categories are again being stretched.

Yet this is not just a call to hand-wringing and depressive looks, but we remember that Lent really means *springtime* in its oldest root. Our call in this Lenten passage is a challenge to pray and be centered in a God who does give new life; our own very presence needs to convey that message. Our letting go is not to make

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## Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America Opens at the Smithsonian

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Discovery Theater. This program highlights Catholic sisters and their colleagues in the field of education both yesterday and today, their efforts, accomplishments, and challenges, with a special focus on educational endeavors in the African American community. Panelists for this event will be Mary Charlotte Marshall, OSP; Barbara Spears, SNJM; and Mary Bourdon, RJM. Patricia Haley, SCN, president of the National Black Sisters Conference, will moderate the panel discussion.

Another free public program, "Women in Healthcare: Continuing the Legacy," is being presented on March 16 from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM in the center's Discovery Theater. This program honors the contributions of women religious to the development of health care in the United States and explores health care issues and challenges today. More information will follow.



*Helen Maher Garvey, BVM, director of the Women & Spirit exhibit, welcomes the guests at the January 14 reception at the Smithsonian*



*Among the 300 guests at the opening were Thomas Smolich, SJ, president of the US Jesuit Conference; Thomas Reese, SJ, Theological Center at Georgetown; Frank Butler of FADICA, and his wife, Fran*



*LCWR president Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA welcomes Mother M. Clare Millea, ASCJ of the Apostolic Visitation office*



*Local exhibit co-chair Mary Waskowiak, RSM greets apostolic nuncio Archbishop Pietro Sambici; Constance FitzGerald, OCD; and Colette Ackerman, OCD*

## LCWR Initiates the Contemporary Religious Life Project

At the August 2009 assembly, the LCWR members unanimously affirmed the LCWR Call for 2010-2015. This document authorized the establishment of new conference committees in order to address the critical issues facing religious life as it moves into the future. The focus of these committees is to assist LCWR to assume an anticipatory role as it studies the signs of the times in the world and church and to distill the implications of these movements for religious life, and to work at strengthening the conference itself to serve its members in the most effective manner in this rapidly changing era. To this end, two committees have become operational, and the establishment of a third committee which will work on development and fundraising for LCWR, is in process.

### Contemporary Religious Life Committee

The Contemporary Religious Life Committee has met three times by conference call. It has defined its work in three categories as follows.

#### Ongoing Study

The committee members are taking an active role in studying the current literature about religious life in order to develop a plan for naming the topics that seem most critical for leaders to attend to at this time. In consultation with the LCWR national board, the committee will choose one topic for particular study by LCWR during each calendar year. The focus for 2010, as affirmed by the 2009 assembly, is the ecclesial role of women religious.

#### Developing and Implementing Annual Process

Each year the committee will develop and implement a 12-month process that focuses on in-depth study of and theological reflection on the emerging question facing religious life selected for that calendar year. Particular emphasis will be placed on examining the question from the perspective of its ramifications for leadership development. The implementation process could include recommendations for topics and ideas to be included in the assembly, regional meetings, publications, workshops, and more.

#### Developing a Long-Range Plan for Ongoing Education for LCWR Members

The committee will meet by conference call on February 2 and again for an all-day meeting at the LCWR offices in Silver Spring on March 8 to begin working on a long-range plan for ongoing education for LCWR members to address the emerging questions facing religious life today.

Sandra Schneiders, IHM and Constance FitzGerald, OCD have agreed to serve as consultants on this project and will participate in the March 8 meeting. Cathy Bertrand, SSND will serve as the meeting facilitator.

Serving on the committee are Marie McCarthy, SP; Susan Schorsten, HM; Rosemary Smith, SC; Mary Whited, CPPS; Jane Burke, SSND (executive director and chair); and Annmarie Sanders, IHM (staff).

### Strategic Operational Plan Committee

The LCWR Strategic Operational Plan Committee is charged with developing proposals that maximize the conference's life and effectiveness in light of its demographic and financial realities. On January 27, the committee is meeting at the LCWR national office to afford committee members the opportunity for face-to-face contact in conducting a SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) analysis of the conference. This meeting is the second gathering of the committee (the first was held by conference call in December).

Janet Roesener, CSJ will facilitate the January 27 meeting. Committee members who will be in attendance are: Kathleen Durkin, CSJ; Beatrice Hernandez OSF (LCWR finance committee); Pat McDermott, RSM; Theresa Sandok, OSM (LCWR national board); Jane Burke, SSND (chair); Pat Cormack, SCSC (staff); and Marie Lucey, OSF (staff). Barbara Staropoli, SSJ (LCWR national board) also serves on the committee.

This planning process is to include studies of the current realities of the conference and its members; the long-term needs of the conference and its members; possible reconfigurations of the governance structures of LCWR, including the presidency, national board, committees, regions, and the LCWR national office; as well as ways of enhancing utilization of the services offered by other entities serving religious life.

## LCWR and US Women Religious in the News

The following are links to some of the articles about US women religious and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious that have been in the news since the publication of the January 2010 LCWR newsletter.

“Catholic Group Supports Senate on Abortion Aid”

*New York Times*

Article by David Kirkpatrick

December 26, 2009

[www.nytimes.com/2009/12/26/health/policy/26abortion.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/26/health/policy/26abortion.html)

“Religious life as a prophetic life form”

*National Catholic Reporter*

Five essays by Sandra Schneiders, IHM

January 4-8, 2010

[ncronline.org/news/women/religious-life-prophetic-life-form](http://ncronline.org/news/women/religious-life-prophetic-life-form)

“Women religious visitations to begin in April”

*National Catholic Reporter*

Article by Thomas C. Fox

January 12, 2010

[ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/women-religious-visitations-begin-april](http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/women-religious-visitations-begin-april)

“America’s debt to Catholic sisters”

*Washington Post*

Article by Thomas J. Reese, SJ

January 15, 2010

[http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/georgetown/2010/01/women\\_spirit\\_catholic\\_sisters\\_in\\_america.html](http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/georgetown/2010/01/women_spirit_catholic_sisters_in_america.html)

“Mother Millea urges U.S. religious to comply with study”

*National Catholic Reporter*

Article by Thomas C. Fox

January 22, 2010

[ncronline.org/news/women/mother-millea-urges-us-religious-comply-study](http://ncronline.org/news/women/mother-millea-urges-us-religious-comply-study)

“Female priests defy Catholic Church, hope to change it”

*Washington Post*

Article by Katie Balestra

January 23, 2010

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/22/AR2010012202919.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/22/AR2010012202919.html)

## Changes in the LCWR National Office

In mid-January Carol Crowder, LCWR’s membership coordinator, retired from her position. LCWR’s administrative assistant, Carol Glidden, has now taken on the responsibilities of membership coordination, in addition to her other tasks. All questions about membership should now be directed to Carol at [cglidden@lcwr.org](mailto:cglidden@lcwr.org).



## Lenten Focus

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to convey that message. Our letting go is not to make ourselves feel better, but to remind ourselves and others that we are to be about the common good of all. And our giving voice for others is that continuing opening for hope in the midst of darkness and distress. The *springtime* of the Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ is still possible, is still happening! (I prayed, it must happen for Haiti.)

As I walked through the *Women & Spirit* exhibit again today (January 14), that Lenten *springtime* pushed its way through the sadness of the reality of Haiti. I thought, this is so much of our vocation, presence and response, conversion to our God and our sisters and brothers. The images spoke that our sisters before us have done it. We are doing it. We are called to continue to be present and respond in our now and future to come. That’s our part in making the resurrected face of God present and recognized among us.

*Blessed New Lent, you Women of Spirit!*

## LCWR Holds Sixth Leading from Within Retreat

**T**wenty-five LCWR members participated in the sixth annual LCWR Leading from Within Retreat held at the Redemptorist Renewal Center, Tucson, Arizona, from January 16-22.

Maria Elena Martinez, OSF and Regina Bechtle, SC directed the retreat, and Annmarie Sanders, IHM from the LCWR staff led the prayer and ritual.

The next LCWR retreat will take place from January 16-23, 2011 at the San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center in Winter Park, Florida.

*The LCWR Leading from Within Retreat provided opportunities for quiet reflection, as well as input and some individual and group spiritual direction*



*Throughout the week the retreatants utilized prayer shawls made by women weavers in Chiapas, Mexico*



*The Leading from Within Retreat provides LCWR members a unique opportunity to reflect on the blessings of religious life leadership*

## Outstanding Leadership Award Deadline: February 12

**E**ach year at its annual assembly, LCWR presents the Outstanding Leadership Award. A Constant Contact message to members asking for their advice about who should be the recipient of the award was sent to members on January 13. The message provides links for the materials about the award nominees.

The deadline for submitting input through an online survey is February 12. Questions about the process should be directed to Pat Cormack, SCSC at [pcormack@lcwr.org](mailto:pcormack@lcwr.org).

## How LCWR Assembly Sites are Chosen

Since membership in LCWR changes as leaders are elected for specific terms, the LCWR national office staff felt it would be helpful to review the process used by LCWR to procure assembly sites.

The board has established some specific criteria for assembly site selection. These appear in the secure Members Information section of our website on pages 35-36 of the LCWR Policy Handbook. They cover facility requirements, guest room accommodations, dining options, and overall pricing, as well as criteria to insure sound employment and ecological impact policies. LCWR looks for cities with multiple options for air carriers. It also attempts to rotate the assembly through various regions since LCWR depends upon volunteers from the region for some of the onsite services.

In recent years LCWR has received requests to find East Coast locations and has attempted to do this without much success. Pat Cormack, SCSC recently completed several site visits to prepare for the 2012 Assembly. Presently, LCWR is constrained by several factors. Ideally, it looks for a site that can host the entire assembly under one roof. It looks for the most economical hotels that can provide space for the general session (at least 800 persons at tables) and that can provide space for 90-100 exhibitors. It must also consider whether the site has enough meeting rooms to accommodate break-out sessions should they be required. Unfortunately, there are very few locations that have the space and can also provide at least 600 hotel rooms (LCWR's peak night requirement).

Most of the East Coast hotels that have the space also have rates of \$200-300 per night for sleeping rooms as well as higher food and beverage rates. LCWR will continue to keep in mind the input from members about assembly locations to the extent possible. The conference hopes this information is helpful background for its members.

At the conclusion of recent site visits, Pat recommended that the 2012 assembly be held in St. Louis since the hotels there match the majority of site selection criteria.

Any questions about site selection should be directed to Pat Cormack at [pcormack@lcwr.org](mailto:pcormack@lcwr.org).

## JFI Urges Response to Postcard Campaign

It was reported at the January 13 meeting of the Justice for Immigrants Campaign that a second printing of actual postcards will be available by the first week in February, and that 4800 cards had been sent electronically. While postcards are needed from all states, there is special need in Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Indiana. Deliveries of cards, both actual and electronic, will be made on February 10 in coordination with the Interfaith Immigration Campaign, but cards can continue to be sent after that date. The electronic card can be found on JFI's new website ([www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)) with directions for sending.

In Missouri, Kansas City is on board, but greater response from St. Louis is needed to work in collaboration with an active local JFI group. Anyone interested is asked to contact Jill Gerschutz at [jgerschutz@jesuit.com](mailto:jgerschutz@jesuit.com).

Legislatively, the bill introduced by Rep. Luis Gutierrez has many strengths. Congressional visits continue by members of the JFI core group and will be made on February 9 by participants in the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, as well as on March 22 by those participating in Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) whose theme this year is migration/immigration. EAD information and registration can be found at [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org)



The first sign-on letter in 2010 came from Jubilee USA, a letter to US secretary of the treasury, Timothy Geithner, expressing gratitude for the government's efforts to mobilize emergency assistance for Haiti, but also urging the cancellation of Haiti's remaining debts (some were cancelled in the past year), and provision of relief assistance as grants rather than loans as proposed by the IMF.

## Climate Change Groups Gear Up for 2010

In January meetings, organizations working on climate change issues reported on experiences at Copenhagen, speaking to disappointments, limitations, and a few positives offering possibilities for advocacy in the coming year.

**Catholic Coalition on Climate Change:** During the January 15 meeting, members heard from Jennifer Kefer, senior advisor at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, who provided an overview of domestic policy concerns and options, and from Rev. Jim Ball, president of the Evangelical Environmental Network, who gave a summary of international negotiations in Copenhagen and an overview of international policy options to address adaptation in the world's poorest countries. Jennifer outlined the Economic Benefits bill in the House and indicated that in the Senate there are two efforts to move beyond the Kerry-Boxer bill but senators need to hear from faith communities that there is too little funding to protect those who are poor. She emphasized that legislation should not focus solely on utility bills. Internationally, Rev. Ball sees the Copenhagen Accord as a vital, while not major, step forward and identified its accomplishments. Although there were no binding agreements, and the accords are vague, his perception is that President Obama's appearance saved the conference from being a disaster.

**Faith, Ecology and Economy:** The United States and a few countries assume control of meetings while others feel left out. The pledge on funding for developing countries is a positive step but needs a concrete plan. A caravan of indigenous people were strong and effective in their concern about the forest protection efforts which, while a positive, do not provide for biodiversity on which indigenous people depend.

**Faith Groups on Climate Change:** Similar reports on disappointments and some positives were presented. One of the positives was the participation of many different constituencies — faith groups, trade, agriculture, and others — providing strengthening of links among the groups. This group decided to focus on working with the US Treasury Department regarding funding pledges and channeling funds through alternatives to the World Bank and IMF.

## Upcoming LCWR Dates

### LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

*Bethany Center  
Lutz, Florida*  
March 1 — 4, 2010

### LCWR New Leader Workshop

*Conference Center - University of St. Mary of the Lake  
Mundelein, Illinois*  
March 11 — 14, 2010

### LCWR Assembly

*Dallas, Texas*  
August 10 — 14, 2010

### LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center  
Winter Park, FL*  
January 16 — 23, 2011

### LCWR New Leader Workshop

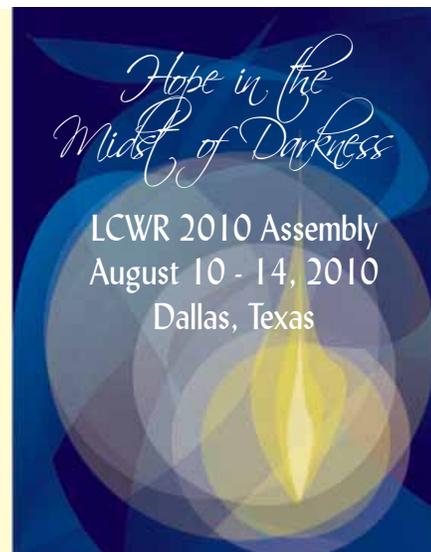
*Conference Center - University of St. Mary of the Lake  
Mundelein, Illinois*  
March 24 — 27, 2011

### LCWR Assembly

*Garden Grove, California*  
August 9 — 13, 2011

### LCWR Assembly

*St. Louis, Missouri*  
August 7 — 11, 2012



# WOMEN & spirit

CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

## Upcoming Showings

**Smithsonian-International Gallery  
in the Dillon Ripley Center**  
Washington, DC  
*January 15 - April 25, 2010*

**Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage**  
Beachwood, Ohio (outside of Cleveland)  
*May 9 - August 28, 2010*

**Statue of Liberty National Monument/Ellis Island  
Immigration Museum**  
New York  
*September 24 - January 22, 2011*

**Mississippi River Museum**  
Dubuque, Iowa  
*February - April 2011*

## Permanent Housing for Exhibit

Written proposals are still being accepted for permanent housing for the *Women & Spirit* exhibit after it completes its travels. Motherhouses, universities, or other settings may be possibilities.

The requirements for the venue would be: 3500 square feet, 10-foot height, assumption of the cost of transporting the content of the exhibit to the site, and maintenance of the exhibit. (Original artifacts would be returned to their owners and facsimiles would be created.)

Written proposals should be sent to Helen Garvey, BVM at [hmgarvey@aol.com](mailto:hmgarvey@aol.com).

## LCWR Skills Survey

Contribute to LCWR's collection of valuable data by completing the 2010 members' skills survey at [www.lcwr.org/members/index.html](http://www.lcwr.org/members/index.html). Surveys should be completed by February 10.



The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) has received a grant award of \$47,450 to fund the gathering of a think tank of highly skilled experts in various fields of church life and ministry to work with the information gleaned from the recent NRVC/CARA study on recent vocations to religious life.

The purpose of the think tank is to:

- study in depth the data and best practices for vocational recruitment as outlined in the NRVC / CARA study;
- find creative strategies to promote religious life from the various disciplines represented;
- incorporate these creative strategies into a strategic plan of concrete action steps that would increase the number of candidates in religious institutes from the various disciplines represented.

NRVC executive director Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, noted, "The completion of our recent vocation study presents all of us with a unique opportunity. Given the evidence of renewed interest in religious life found in a segment of younger Catholics, we are encouraged to present religious life as a viable and joy-filled life option. Likewise, with fewer sisters, priests, and brothers in contact with young adults, it is essential that we make young Catholics aware of the rich legacy and tradition found in religious life. The NRVC/CARA study definitely challenges us to champion new perspectives, fresh ideas, and innovative approaches to vocation ministry by generating new energy in promoting religious life. It is my hope that the action plan that will result from this project will give us direction and focus as we work together to ensure a new generation of women and men religious in this country." A foundation that wishes to remain anonymous awarded NRVC the grant.

**RCRI** The Resource Center for Religious Institutes

## Orientation to the Management of Religious Institutes

May 24-28, 2010  
Chicago, Illinois  
Sponsored by RCRI

*A seminar for those new to leadership and/or management of religious institutes, including members of leadership councils, treasurers, chief financial officers and business managers.*

Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center  
513 West Fullerton Parkway • Chicago, IL 60614-64228  
Starts on Monday, May 24 at 1:30 pm. and concludes on Friday, May 28 at noon.

Topics include:

- Structures and Governance
- Stewardship
- Canon and Civil Law Issues
- Finance Issues for Leadership
- Planning and Asset Protection
- Quarterly Reporting, Budget Processing
- Audits, Forecasting
- Investments: Investment Policy and Committee, Socially Responsible Investments, The Marketplace
- Member Issues
- Taxes, Tax Exemption, Personal Patrimony
- Government Programs: SSI, SSA, HIPPA
- Human Resources and Employee Issues: Hiring, Firing, Benefits, At Will Employment
- Title 7: Property Issues and Canon Law
- Insurance and Liability
- NRRO Services
- RCRI Resources

## The Culture of Religious Institutes

May 24, 2010

*A pre-conference workshop for employees who are not members of a religious institute*

A pre-conference workshop for lay treasurers, CFOs, finance directors will also be offered on Monday, May 24 from 8:30 AM until noon. The purpose of this workshop is to familiarize those who are now working with or for a religious institute with the nuances of religious life, its goals and missions.

Registrations for the orientation and pre-conference introduction will be available soon at: [www.trcri.org](http://www.trcri.org)

## New seminar presented by The Resource Center for Religious Institutes Planning for the Future Alternatives to Reconfiguration March 1-3, 2010 Washington, DC

In planning for the care of its members and its continuing legacy, some institutes want to consider options other than reconfiguration. This seminar will help those communities to plan for the future. It is appropriate for all types of institutes: large, small, USA or internationally based. Topics include: Financial Planning; Real Property: Civil and Canon Law; The Future of Ministries; Providing for Leadership and Management; Covenant and Management Agreements and other Legal Documents; Associates; and Preparing a Legacy.

Presenters will be Daniel Ward, OSB, JD, JCL, MA • Donna Sauer Miller, JD, JCL • Clare Lorenzatti, DBA, MBA • Mark MacDougall, JD • and Kelly Connors, PM, JCD candidate. The seminar, held at the Washington Retreat House in Washington, DC, begins Monday, March 1 at noon and concludes Wednesday, March 3 at noon.

The registration form, and tuition, housing, commuter fees, and other information is available on the Resource Center for Religious Institutes website at [www.trcri.org](http://www.trcri.org).



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