

August/September 2010

Pax Christi USA Honors LCWR and US Women Religious

At its national conference on peacemaking, Pax Christi USA honored the Leadership Conference of Women Religious with its Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award. LCWR president Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA received the award at the closing of the conference in Chicago on July 18.

In her acceptance speech, Marlene spoke of LCWR's historic commitment to work for social justice. She stated, "These are the reasons why, since 1981, LCWR has passed more than 100 resolutions to action, prayed and fasted, participated in vigils and demonstrations, advocated with government leaders, taught students and co-workers about conflict resolution, written articles, witnessed to nonviolence as a way of life, and collaborated with others in peacemaking activities." She went on to note some of the particular peacemaking efforts LCWR has made over the years. The full text of her speech can be found on the LCWR website at: www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/paxchristiaward.pdf.

Pax Christi had also set up a "wall of thanks" in the conference meeting space where participants had posted photos and notes of appreciation to sisters who had influenced and inspired them.



LCWR president Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA accepts the Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award on behalf of LCWR.



LCWR national board members Nancy Reynolds, SP and Patricia Crowley, OSB also participated in the Pax Christi conference.



Hope in the Midst of Darkness

2010 LCWR Assembly

Hope in the Midst of Darkness

Exploring the Ecclesial Role of Women Religious

August 10 - 13, 2010 -- Dallas, Texas

See page 3 for more information on the assembly

From the LCWR Presidency A Pilgrimage in Hope

by J Lora Dambroski, OSF — LCWR Past President

After more than several faulty starts preparing this *Update*, knowing it would be my last as part of the presidency of LCWR, I have come to this simple reflection. It has been quite a journey these past three years, a *trip*, a pilgrimage of walking on a path with no previous signposts to guide the way.

With all of the challenges to women religious in this country (and worldwide, for that matter) over this time from within and without - our own congregations, our own church and our own country - there has been a call to refine anew who we are and what we are about, where our focus is for life and ministry (*like they could be separated!*).

We have taken up those challenges and have not backed away into some comfortable corner where new light could not enter. The light. My awareness over these years is that



into what God invites. I am grateful that we believe and act on the belief that there is a place for everyone at God's table. Fear has not been the guide but integrity and truth as we search for it.

One of the core insights of William Lynch, SJ, in his book on *Hope*, written possibly more than 30 years ago, is that *hope is the virtue of imagination*. This has come back to me again and again these past three years. Seeing things new is God's gift, living our commitment in ways unexpected is gift and virtue. But, as Dr. Shawn Copeland invites us into deeper

hope we know the images are not always obvious or easy. Dr. Walter Brueggemann in his interview in *Occasional Papers* (Summer 2010) reminded us, "it is very tricky to find the courage or freedom to speak freely of alternative futures when you are putting your economic base (*who you are so publically, I may add*) in jeopardy."

To live from this virtue of hope, this virtue of imagination, is very risky for many reasons we all could name. We know, "God's imagination, as given to us in scripture, is bent towards healing and transformation and newness, but it's not without conflict." (W. Brueggemann) Reading our members' reflections in this same issue of *Occasional Papers*, gives indication where the source of their *light* is for this continuing pilgrimage knowing of its perils and conflicts as well as the joys... the Gospel, as followers of Jesus in a new century, contemplative hearts, faith communities, compassion, courageous presence, mystical-contemplative experience not

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again and again we have seen that the light is *The Light*, and the way for us is *The Way... the light of Christ and the way of his Gospel, as we are called to live it today and onto paths with each other that we are yet to discover as the Spirit of Wisdom (Sophia) enlivens and guides our imaginations*. It has not been easy but this time for me has been one of the most contemplative and clear awarenesses of what commitment to something, to Someone (someones) is.

What has helped to make this pilgrimage worth it is the women who have been on this way together. At our 2010 assembly we will reflect on what is *Hope in the Darkness*, in this darkness that is so much a part of our reality. For me that *Hope* has proven to be over and over again the committed women religious who continue to be a *presence, support and walkers of this way together*, even in the darkness that seems created from some most unsuspecting sources. So, for all of you, I am grateful for this staunch holding fast to all that we hold sacred. And, even with our varying perspectives of the unfolding map, I am grateful that we continue the pilgrimage

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paralyzed by fear, women of God who have come to know and live out a life in abundance while always stirring the embers of hope.

We will continue the pilgrimage. And, I say *pilgrimage*, because it is a holy experience walking with our Holy God and our holy companions convinced we do this not just for ourselves but for all the pilgrims along the way.

See you on the way... *Peace and every good...*



Schedule Available at
www.lcwr.org/members/LCWRassembly10.pdf

Checklist for Preparation for the LCWR Assembly

- Read the Summer 2010 issue of LCWR's *Occasional Papers* entitled "Hope in the Midst of Darkness."
- Read the LCWR 2009-2010 annual report available online at www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/report10.pdf
- Pack a picture or symbol that represents hope in the midst of darkness. These symbols will be used in the ritual that opens the assembly.
- Read the information on the candidates for LCWR president and secretary on the LCWR Members Information section of the website (www.lcwr.org).
- Consider ordering CDs or DVDs of the assembly presentations for your further reflection and inform your institute's members about the possibility of ordering them as well. The texts of the presentations will not be available online as they have been in the past.

All are reminded to verify that they have registered for the assembly (the cancelled check is confirmation) and made hotel reservations.



Not-to-Be Missed on the LCWR Website

LCWR continues to receive letters of support from around the world as US women religious participate in the apostolic visitation.
www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/av.htm

The prayer for the apostolic visitation and listing of congregations requesting prayer during their visitation
www.lcwr.org -- Under LCWR Members Information.

Religious Life Annotated Bibliography and Reflection Questions Available

The LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Committee has compiled the beginning of an annotated bibliography on articles and books that the committee members have found helpful.

The bibliography (available on the LCWR website at www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/bibliography.htm) is accompanied by reflection questions. Leaders are encouraged to utilize this new resource with their own members who may be interested in the materials for individual or communal reflection.

Online Assembly Evaluation

Immediately following the assembly LCWR members will receive an online survey that will serve as the assembly evaluation. All members are asked to complete the survey, whether they participated or not. The feedback obtained from these evaluations is invaluable for planning future assemblies.

LCWR Assembly Explores Contemporary Religious Life Project Plans

At the 2009 LCWR assembly, the members unanimously affirmed a plan for taking LCWR into the future. The plan was subsequently titled the LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Project. This effort called for the creation of three committees: a Strategic Operational Plan Committee, a Contemporary Religious Life Committee, and a Development Committee.

At the 2010 assembly, the Strategic Operational Plan Committee will present some of its ideas to maximize the life and effectiveness of LCWR in light of its demographic and financial realities. The committee will be seeking feedback particularly on some ways of restructuring the LCWR regions.

The Contemporary Religious Life Committee has been exploring ways in which the conference could engage with the emerging changes happening in the world and church and how those changes impact religious life and leadership. During the assembly this committee will present a possible plan for how LCWR could develop and provide resources and processes that foster a national conversation among women religious around the most critical questions.

Feedback from the membership to these committees at the assembly will be critical to moving these plans forward.



Janet Roesener, CSJ facilitates the LCWR Strategic Operational Plan Committee's June meeting at Washington Theological Union in Takoma Park, Maryland.



Susan Schorsten, HM; Mary Whited, CPPS; Rosemary Smith, SC; Catherine Bertrand, SSND; Marie McCarthy, SP; and Jane Burke, SSND work on the proposal of the Contemporary Religious Life Committee at its July meeting at Washington Theological Union.

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

A retreat for LCWR members and LCWR associates who are serving in congregation leadership

January 16 - 21, 2011

San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center

Join with other women religious leaders for a five-day retreat that will provide opportunities to reflect on the blessings and challenges of religious life leadership today. The days will include input, quiet contemplative space, a variety of ritual experiences, and some opportunity for individual and group spiritual direction for those who so choose.

Retreat Directors



Regina Bechtle, SC



María Elena Martínez, OSF

Registration forms will be sent online at a later time. Participation will be limited to the first 25 members to submit their form and check.

Women Religious in the News

“Speak up for our women religious”

National Catholic Reporter

July 26, 2010

Editorial

nronline.org/news/women-religious/speak-our-women-religious

“Jewish museum exhibit shows great history of work by nuns”

The Columbus Dispatch

July 23, 2010

www.dispatch.com/live/content/faith_values/stories/2010/07/23/jewish-museum-exhibit-shows-great-history-of-work-by-nuns.html?sid=101

“U.S. women religious leaders, take notice, take heart”

National Catholic Reporter

July 8, 2010

Article by Thomas C. Fox

nronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/us-women-religious-leaders-take-notice-take-heart

“Vatican officials, US women religious meet”

National Catholic Reporter

July 6, 2010

Article by Thomas C. Fox

nronline.org/news/vatican-officials-us-women-religious-meet

Is Your Leadership Term About to End?

If your leadership term is ending this month, you must submit a change of leadership form so that the LCWR office can properly transfer LCWR membership to new leaders. Please use the change of leadership form found in the LCWR Members Information section (password-protected) of the website at www.lcwr.org/members/index.html.

Upcoming Showings

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, 2010 - January 22, 2011

Mississippi River Museum
Dubuque, Iowa
February - April 2011

Mount St. Mary College
Los Angeles, California
June 17 - August 14, 2011

Center for History
South Bend, Indiana
September 2 - December 31, 2011

One additional venue is still in process for 2012

Exhibit Attendance

As of July 26, a total of 300,484 people had visited the exhibit since its opening in May 2009.



Serving as panelists at the Conference on the History of Women Religious were: (standing) Carole Shinnick, SSND; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; (seated) Helen Maher Garvey, BVM; Karen Kennelly, CSJ; and Barbara Cervenka, OP.

Work Progresses on Women & Spirit Documentary



Melissa Berry of Seruto & Co. interviews Miriam Therese MacGillis, OP at Genesis Farm for the documentary.

LCWR continues with its work in producing a documentary to share with a wider audience the story of the contributions of Catholic sisters to building the nation. The film will include some of the interviews and footage seen in the exhibit, as well as additional interviews with historians and other women religious.

The one-hour documentary will be completed in early 2011 with the goal of broadcast through PBS and documentary festivals.

Exhibit Featured at the 2010 Conference on the History of Women Religious

Five members of the LCWR History Committee served as panelists at the Eighth Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious held at the University of Scranton in June. The panelists spoke on the planning, design, creation, and marketing of the *Women & Spirit* exhibit to an audience of scholars, educators, researchers, and women religious.

Readers Express Their Appreciation



More than 21,000 copies of the 2010 LCWR reflection book, *Hope in the Midst of Darkness*, were distributed throughout the United States and in other countries. Many of the readers have written to the LCWR national office to express their gratitude for this publication, asking particularly that their appreciation be extended to the LCWR member writers. Typical comments included:

“It is July 22 and the last reflection page of your book has been reached....unfortunately! These days have been so rich with the daily presentations in nourishing courage, strength, solidarity among us as we journey in these times.”

“This year’s book was especially wonderful and I so enjoyed using it each day in solidarity with others around the globe!”

NRCAT Holds Strategy Session

On June 23, 2010 the National Religious Coalition Against Torture held a meeting of representatives of core members in Washington, DC to strategize about its goal to advocate for US policies that help end torture by other countries. Experts addressed several options which were discussed before consensus agreement was reached.

- The Leahy Law, so called after its principal sponsor, Senator Patrick Leahy, a human rights stipulation in US congressional foreign assistance legislation which prohibits US military assistance to foreign military units that violate human rights with impunity. There was agreement to support, despite its flaws.

- Appropriations Rider: Consider inclusion of the Leahy Law in the 2011 Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill; it is a tool waiting to be used. Following much discussion about how it could be used, participants agreed to support it and Senator Leahy’s staff person welcomed suggestions for strengthening this modest proposal.
- OPCAT (Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture) which requires nations that ratify the treaty to establish one or more National Preventive Mechanisms to conduct oversight of those in prisons or other detention facilities. Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002, OPCAT has 74 signatories, 50 of which have ratified the agreement. It is time the US signs and ratifies. There was agreement to work for President Obama’s signature, even if a 2/3 vote by the Senate for ratification is out of reach.
- Compile a Torture Watch List: A list should connect to US policy and funding. A list will be ready by early December.

On July 14, the Catholic Leadership Council of NRCAT participated in a conference call to address several issues. An update was provided on the Physicians for Human Rights report on CIA torture experiments during the Bush administration, and call for an investigation by the HHS Office of Human Research Protections. Twenty organizations joined this “complaint,” including CMSM, LCWR, and the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns. The OHRP said it was not within their jurisdiction and denied the request. The Physicians for Human Rights will release their report and explore other departments, so the complaint stands. (Additional information is available at www.nrcat.org.)



Update is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally.

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Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Assembly

Dallas, Texas
August 10 — 13, 2010
Travel date: August 14

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center
Winter Park, Florida
January 16 — 21, 2011

LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

Franciscan Retreat Center
Scottsdale, Arizona
March 7 — 10, 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

LCWR Assembly

Orlando, Florida
August 13 — 17, 2013

Throughout the year, LCWR member congregations, their sponsored works, and many other organizations send their used ink cartridges to Empties4cash, a company that pays up to \$4.00 for each empty inkjet cartridge sent. The company provides free supplies and free shipping, and there is no cost to participate. Money received by LCWR from Empties4cash is placed in the LCWR scholarship fund.

Anyone interested in participating in this effort can receive directions and free supplies by contacting Carol Glidden at cglidden@lcwr.org or by calling 301-588-4955. Participants must provide a contact name, e-mail, phone number, and address.



During the past month, LCWR signed the following:

- A statement of support for the UN Resolution on the Human Right to Water
- Letter to UN Ambassador Susan Rice from faith organizations urging US support of this UN Resolution
- A letter to Senator Reid asking for inclusion of international action on climate change in proposed energy legislation
- A letter to the Senators Reid and Durbin in support of the proposed Local Jobs for America Act (S3500)
- Jubilee USA letter to President Obama calling him to promote expanded debt cancellation and reforms of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund

Help Build the Assembly Scholarship Fund by Recycling Cartridges

LCWR works in conjunction with a national cartridge recycling program in an effort to protect the environment and support LCWR members who need financial assistance to attend the annual assembly.





Religious Formation Conference

“Biblical Foundations for Consecrated Life: A Prophetic Vision”

How does consecrated life rekindle its authentic character, reinstate its moral credibility, and respond to the challenges of our time? **vanThanh Nguyen, SVD, STD**, assistant professor of New Testament Studies and chair of Biblical Languages and Literature at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago will proffer the answer that is found in the rediscovery of the biblical prophetic model. The session explores the biblical landscape to better define a prophetic model and vision to guide contemporary religious life. In three presentations accentuating themes of consecrated life as both a life of prophetic vision and witness and the evangelical vows as a prophetic way of life, Nguyen will outline an approach to consecrated life that is vital for the challenges and obligations ahead for consecrated life in the church. All presentations will include reflection and sharing by participants. The program gathers at 8:30 AM and closes by 3:00 PM.

Dates and Location:
September 25, 2010

Bon Secours Spiritual Center, Marriottsville, Maryland

October 16, 2010

Savior Pastoral Center, Kansas City, Kansas

November 13, 2010

Maria Center, SSND Motherhouse, St. Louis, Missouri

November 20, 2010

Xavier Retreat & Conference Center
Convent Station, New Jersey

December 11, 2010

Our Lady of the Lake Convent - San Antonio, Texas

Cost: TBA

More information and registration materials are available at www.relforcon.org or by calling Yvonne DeBruin at 301-588-4938 at the RFC office, 8820 Cameron Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

RFC Orientation to Formation

October 8-10, 2010

Xavier Center

Convent Station, NJ

More information is on the RFC website

Extractive Industries: Tar Sands Issue

As if the Gulf oil disaster is not enough, the Keystone XL pipeline, proposed by TransCanada, would carry 900,000 barrels of tar sands oil daily from Alberta, Canada to the Gulf Coast, through 1700 miles of US farmland and fragile ecosystems, such as the Missouri River. The Extractives Industry Workgroup learned about tar sands from Friends of the Earth during a June 21 meeting.

Facts are startling: tar sands oil emits three times more greenhouse gases during production than conventional gasoline; extraction requires strip mining huge tracts of pristine forest; about three barrels of water are polluted and dumped in toxic pools for every barrel of oil produced; the project harms the lives and health of indigenous people living downstream from tar sands operations. The list goes on.

A Nixon-era executive order requires that the Department of State evaluate all pipeline proposals that cross US borders, so the Obama administration has an opportunity avert this dangerous mistake in US energy policy.

The workgroup agreed to begin to educate and advocate on this issue. As a first step, some members, including LCWR, joined Friends of the Earth in a protest outside the Canadian Embassy in DC. For more information and to send a message to President Obama: www.foe.org/keystone-xl-pipeline.