

December 2015

LCWR New Leaders Workshop Revamped

LCWR is pleased to offer a newly revamped New Leaders Workshop in April 2016 at Our Lady



of the Lake University Conference Center in Mundelein, Illinois. This workshop has consistently received "high marks" in evaluations by participants. At the same time, the LCWR staff and resource persons for the workshop have been discussing how the workshop might be improved in order to better respond to emerging understandings of transformational leadership.

The conversation has centered on modeling a contemplative style of engagement, wanting to provide more opportunity for participants to engage with one another and with the resource persons, and wanting to continue to provide the wealth of useful information that has been provided in the past.

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LCWR Issues Statement Calling for Support of Syrian Refugees

LCWR joined others throughout the country to plead for the United States to continue its support of Syrian refugee resettlement in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris. lcsr.org/media/news/let-us-welcome-syrian-refugees



Subscriptions to Occasional Papers Now Available

LCWR is now offering subscriptions to its journal, *Occasional Papers*. Any religious or member of the public may purchase a one-year subscription, which includes two issues per year, for \$15.00 within the United States, or \$30.00 outside of the United States. Subscriptions may be purchased online at: lcsr.org/publications/occasional-papers/subscribe.

LCWR members are asked to share this information with anyone who may be interested in subscribing. Revenue from subscriptions contribute to LCWR's operating budget.

Christmas Gift Idea

Subscriptions may also be purchased for others. \$15.00 provides the recipient with a wealth of informative and reflective reading material on religious life, spirituality, and leadership. Gift subscriptions may be ordered at lcsr.org/publications/occasional-papers/gift.



Gift certificate can be downloaded and given to the gift recipient

From the LCWR Presidency

‘What Do We Do While We’re Waiting?’

by Mary Pellegrino, CSJ — LCWR President-Elect

“**W**hat do we do while we’re waiting?” My four-year-old nephew asked as we arrived just minutes before opening time at the Children’s Museum in Pittsburgh on a snowy December day more than a decade ago. No concept of time, and the mere fact of a locked door between him and hours of unbridled play was enough to launch a panicked meltdown.

I think of my nephew’s question each year when Advent rolls around. What do we do while we’re waiting? And more than that, what are we waiting for?

Those questions seem particularly poignant for us as leaders in the generation of women religious alive today.

Of course we know how to observe Advent. We’ve been doing it all of our lives. We know that Advent, both the season and the movement, calls us to prepare for a reality that is both now and not yet, a future whose essence is shaped by everything we do and everything we don’t do in the present.

So we prepare. We divest of accumulated clutter that obscures the vision of our hearts and dims the horizon of our spirits. We carve out time and space in the darkness. We might even befriend the chaos that swirls around or within us so that we can turn our attention to something far deeper that hollows out and stills our interior.

And we long. We long for the fullness of God’s divinity to fill the opened space of our humanity.

Yes, we know how to observe the Advent of Christmas. At the same time can we imagine that we are also ob-



We do know, though, that cooperating with the activity of God to help bring about this new thing is the work of our generation of religious life.

erving the Advent of a new incarnation of consecrated life in the church?

The word “advent” from the Latin “*adventus*” means “a coming into place, view or being.” It connotes a substantive turning or dawn of a new era.

Consider our generation of religious, those of us alive today throughout the world in every place and culture. Do we not signal - in all of our diversity of charisms and expressions, in all of our varied circumstances - the dawn of a new era of consecrated life in the church? Is there not something or Someone—albeit still obscurely—coming into being in us and through us?

The poet Rilke writing at the advent of the 20th century suggests that the future is already in our blood long before it is revealed.

“We cannot say who has come, Perhaps shall never know, But many signs indicate that the future enters into us in this way In order to transform itself in us long before it happens.”

(Letters to a Young Poet)

What will be is not ours to know – at least not yet. We do know, though, that cooperating with the activity of God to help bring about this new thing is the work of our generation of religious life.

And so we continue to befriend the chaos swirling all around. We cultivate a God-shaped spaciousness equal in breadth and depth, if not yet in every contour, to the grace being offered by our “God who beckons to us from a future abundant in grace, full of challenge, and rich in possibility.” (LCWR Call 2015-2022)

LCWR New Leaders Workshop Revamped

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In order to accomplish this goal, a group of LCWR staff members and resource persons worked together to determine how to insure that valuable content would continue to be available and at the same time revamp the workshop schedule to allow for more reflection and interaction.

This fall associate director of programs, Marie McCarthy, SP worked with the resource providers to capture key content in video recordings. These recordings, along with other resources, will be made available in advance to persons who register for the workshop. This will allow persons and teams to work with some of the material prior to coming to the workshop. In addition these resources will continue to be available following the workshop thus allowing participants to return to various sections when needed.

At the workshop itself LCWR staff and resource persons will work with the participants using a variety of processes including input, role play, journaling, and contemplative engagement to assist participants in deepening their knowledge, skills, and capacities in working together as a transformational leadership team.

New leaders and new leadership teams are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. More information and a registration form can be found at: lcsr.org/calendar/new-leader-workshop-0.



Nancy Schreck, OSF will be among the leaders of the workshop



LCWR executive committee members meet with the staff at the Washington Retreat Center

LCWR Executive Committee Meets in Washington, DC

The members of the LCWR executive committee met on November 11 and later with the executive committee of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men on November 12.

Members of the LCWR staff joined the executive committee for the November 11 meeting where the agenda included the review and approval of the LCWR budget, and discussion of a variety of other matters including the 2016 LCWR assembly, the Leadership Collaborative, and the Hilton Foundation meeting regarding the Catholic Sisters Initiative.

Following the executive committee meeting, the other members of the LCWR national board joined the committee by videoconference to approve the 2016 budget and to review other topics.

The executive committee members are: Marcia Allen, CSJ (president); Mary Pellegrino, CSJ (president-elect); Sharon Holland, IHM (past president); Mary Beth Gianoli, OSF (secretary); Pat Eck, CBS (treasurer); Rosemary Brennan, CSJ and Rose Marie Jasinski, CBS (members at large); and Joan Marie Steadman, CSC (executive director).

THE Occasional Papers



Living in Communion

The upcoming issue of *Occasional Papers* will explore this period in religious life as one rich with potential for deep transformation. Although one could interpret the difficult changes being experienced within religious institutes today as a sign that this way of life is dying, these deep changes may also be seen as a way of preparing religious congregations for significant transformation.

The articles in this issue will provide assistance to religious with effectively navigating this period marked by large amounts of loss, relinquishment, and death. Such losses can become obstacles to the ability to re-imagine religious life for these times and the times ahead.

This issue will offer articles that explore the need for personal and communal grieving and the essential role healthy grieving plays to free religious for the creative work of moving this lifeform forward with hope and imagination. Other articles will assist us in placing the losses we experience in a larger theological context by examining understandings of communion and the oneness that exists among those living and among those who have passed on from this life. What might this invitation to live intentionally in communion mean for those in religious life today?

Included in this issue will be an interview on the communion of saints with theologian Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ.

Although all LCWR members, associates, and subscribers will receive a copy of *Occasional Papers*, many leaders order additional copies for their own members and associates. Orders and payment must be received by **December 16, 2015**. Orders may be placed online at lcwr.org/publications/winter-2016-living-communion.

New Translation of Article Available; Additional Translations Needed

Due to the generosity of Anne Bayart, SU an LCWR associate living in France, a translation into French of the article “Communal Discernment for Generative Adults” by Carole Shinnick, SSND is available on the LCWR website at: lcwr.org/sites/default/files/page/files/le_discernement_communaire_-_shinnick.pdf.

Translations into French and Spanish of several other articles are on the LCWR website as well, thanks to the thoughtfulness of congregations that translate materials for their own members and then make them available to LCWR.

Institutes that provide translations for their members may wish to consider sharing them with LCWR by sending them to Annmarie Sanders, IHM at asanders@lcwr.org. This is an important contribution as LCWR congregations become increasingly diverse in culture and language.

LCWR National Office Welcomes International Visitors

The LCWR national office recently welcomed several visitors from countries outside of the United States who came to speak with the staff about the political and ecclesial realities within their countries.

On November 2, Georg Plank of Pastoral Innovation in Austria, and Sylvie Schares who works in pastoral formation of priests and laity in Luxembourg joined the staff for a conversation on what is happening in the Catholic Church and in their organizations as well as in LCWR. Georg previously visited LCWR in February as he led a delegation from Europe to visit organizations and churches involved in creative pastoral works.

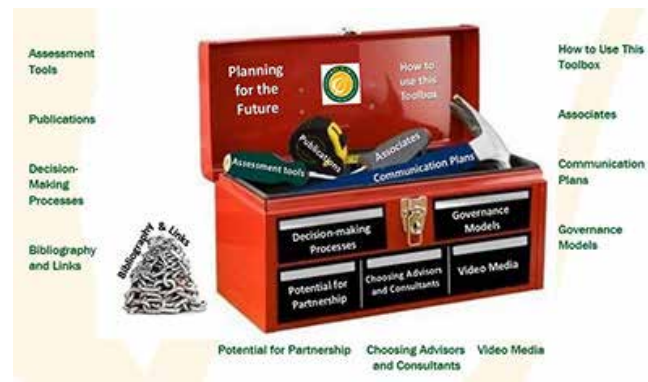
On November 5, LCWR welcomed the staffs of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Resource Center for Religious Institutes, and guests from other organizations to meet Alejandro Diaz of Tutela Legal Doctora Maria Julia Hernandez as well as Jose Artiga, executive director of SHARE El Salvador, to discuss their advocacy for the release of the files of victims who suffered human rights violations and for reparations for the relatives of those who were murdered during the 12-year war in El Salvador.



Marie McCarthy, SP; Joan Mumaw, IHM; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Georg Plank; Sylvie Schares; and Grace Hartzog, SC



Jose Artiga, Alejandro Diaz, and Ann Scholz, SSND



RCRI Offers Planning Resources to LCWR Members

Through the generosity of the GHR Foundation, the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) received a grant to provide resources for religious institutes to assist them in their planning for the future. In order to reach as many institutes as possible, RCRI developed a toolbox that is accessible on the RCRI website.

The toolbox contains a variety of resources including publications, audio and video presentations, webinars, assessment tools, models of governance, and bibliographies that relate to various aspects of planning. Additional resources will continue to be added as they become available.

In November all members received by email a message from the LCWR office with instructions for accessing the toolkit from the RCRI website.

LCWR Participates in USCCB Annual Meeting

Marcia Allen, CSJ; Sharon Holland, IHM; Mary Pellegrino CSJ; Mary Beth Gianoli, OSF; and Joan Marie Steadman, CSC attended meetings of the Commission for Religious Life and Ministry on November 13. At the November 14 meeting of the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, LCWR was represented by Joan Marie. The LCWR presidents and executive director were observers at the USCCB general assembly from November 16-17.

The Commission for Religious Life and Ministry is the USCCB's official link with conferences of women and men religious and is comprised of the executive committees or presidency of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Bishop Michael Burbidge (Raleigh, North Carolina) represents USCCB on the commission. The executive directors/secretaries of each of the four conferences, the president of the National Conference of Vicars for Religious (NCVR), and the executive director of the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) also attend these meetings.

NRRO executive director Janice Bader, CPPS gave a comprehensive report on the work of the office in preparation for a request that will be made at November 2016 USCCB meeting to extend the national collection for religious for another 10 years. The current term of the collection ends in 2017. The collection has been a great support to congregations who qualify for aide by providing direct assistance and resources for planning.

The members of the commission reported on activities engaged in during the year of consecrated life. The four conferences wholeheartedly supported the three initiatives for religious to open their doors and invite in their neighbors to: Come and Meet Your Sisters and Brothers, Serve with Your Sisters and Brothers, and Pray with Your Sisters and Brothers.

Other areas of conversation included the history and role of the commission, *Laudato Si*, and the Year of Mercy, as well as brief reports for each conference/organization.



The CMSWR and LCWR officers enjoyed dinner together during the USCCB meetings. Shown here are: Sister Mary Angela Highfield, OP; Mary Pellegrino, CSJ; Sharon Holland, IHM; Sister Anne Theresa Walsh, ASCJ; Joan Marie Steadman, CSC; Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV; Marcia Allen, CSJ; and Sister Marie Bernadette Thompson, OP.

The USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, which is staffed by the USCCB Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, meets annually with the executive directors of consulting organizations related to clergy (National Federation of Priests Councils, National Organization for Continuing Education, National Association of Hispanic Priests, National Association of Diaconate Directors), vocations (NCDVD, NRVC, Serra), seminary formation (Institute for Priestly Formation, National Association of College Seminaries, National Association of Theological Schools) and religious life (CMSM, CMSWR, LCWR, consecrated virgins, secular institutes, vicars for religious). Each group – clergy, consecrated life, seminary formation, and the vocations group -- considered the theme of the meeting: What can we do to assist the formation of clergy, religious, and laity for a more effective and faithful engagement of contemporary culture in the United States with all its complexities and challenges? Input received from the members of LCWR in response to the following questions was woven into the small group conversation.

- What can be done to support better and more productive dialogue between future pastoral leaders and those in contemporary society?

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LCWR Participates in USCCB Annual Meeting

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- How do we help families help their children to understand what a “vocation” is in general and in particular, to marriage, holy orders, and consecrated life?
- What do you see as significant challenges affecting young people today and their ability to develop a deeper relationship with God through prayer, self-reflection, and service?

The discussions in small groups were animated and wide-ranging as evidenced by the sharing in the large group. This kind of conversation is helpful as relationships of mutual support and understanding develop. All discover that there are some shared common hopes and concerns.

Marcia, Sharon, Mary, and Joan Marie attended the general sessions of the USCCB as observers on November 16 and 17.

By participation in these annual meetings LCWR continues to develop relationships and engage in reflection and conversation that will bear fruit for the church and the global community.

In addition, the leadership of CMSWR invited the LCWR leadership to join them for dinner on November 16. “We spent a delightful evening together,” said Joan Marie. “Gathering around the table in a lovely Italian restaurant we shared lively conversation, our vocation stories, a spirit of joy, and a delicious meal. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know one another. We are grateful for the gracious invitation that Mother Agnes Mary extended to us.”

Leader Pelosi Thanks Women Religious for Work on Iran Nuclear Deal

October 18 was the adoption date for the Iran Nuclear Agreement. Three days later House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi hosted a reception in the Capitol to thank all who had helped to ensure that the painstakingly negotiated agreement did not die in the US Congress. Many in the faith community were actively involved in advocating on behalf of diplomacy. In addition to members of the administration and congress, organizations who helped to promote the agreement were invited. The Catholic community was represented by Franciscan Action Network, Pax Christi International, Maryknoll, and LCWR.



Ann Scholz, SSND; Nancy Pelosi; and Marie Lucey, OSF (former LCWR staff member)

Approximately 75 people attended the reception where Pelosi first thanked President Obama, who was represented by chief-of-staff Denis McDonough; then Secretary Kerry, scientists, former generals, and other notables who were not present; and all the organizations that advocated for the agreement, giving a special nod to “the nuns.” Also briefly addressing the group were Denis McDonough and former ambassador and undersecretary of state Thomas Pickering. While circulating the room, Pelosi personally thanked Ann Scholz, SSND who credited the Adrian Dominicans for the letter of support signed by 4000 Catholic sisters.

Is Your Leadership Term About to End?

If your leadership term is ending this month, we ask you to submit a change of leadership form found in the LCWR Members’ Information section (password-protected) of the website at lwr.org/members/lcwr-membership-information.

Registration Closed for Imagining Justice

Due to the great interest in the 2016 LCWR Imagining Justice Workshop, the event is now full and has a waiting list. No more registrations will be accepted.

Help Make LCWR Membership Possible Through a Donation to the LCWR Scholarship Fund

LCWR is aware that fees for membership are financially challenging for some members. Any congregation that has the means to support members is invited to consider a donation to the LCWR scholarship fund. The conference is grateful to those congregations who have already sent in contributions.

Donations (checks payable to LCWR) may be directed to Grace Hartzog, SC, associate director for business and finance, at 8808 Cameron Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Any congregation that needs financial support is encouraged to contact Grace (ghartzog@lcwr.org) to request scholarship aide.

An Expression of Gratitude

On behalf of the leadership team of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, I want to express our deep gratitude for the prayers, support and caring messages we have received on the death of our sister, Eugenia Calabrese. As members of LCWR we have experienced a greater sense of unity in the struggles we are facing. Your expressions of concern have been a very personal and meaningful outpouring of that oneness. As Eugenia always told us: "Go easy, God will take care of it." We continue to rely on her wisdom.

Fondly,

Helen Kearney, CSJ for Pat Mahoney, Kathleen McKinney and Jane Reilly

Preparing Leaders for the Future

LCWR members are encouraged to apply now to empower their younger vowed members, co-members, or associates to:

- Prepare to meet the demands and challenges of leadership in church, community, and society
- Develop skills to lead from a spirituality attuned to global and local realities
- Communicate and embody their congregation's charism and mission
- Partner with other sisters, associates, and co-members in emerging leadership roles.

The Collaborative Leadership Development Program (CLDP) is an 18-month integrative process with a multi-cultural perspective, designed to prepare women religious, associates, and co-members with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to assume leadership positions in community and ministry. The CLDP is sponsored by a coalition of religious congregations and organizations, including LCWR and the Religious Formation Conference.

The CLDP blends contemplative practices and relationship-building with self-growth and spiritual development, through prayerful study and interaction, online forums, mentoring, and coaching. The program seeks to broaden awareness of sustainability and social justice in our changing church and global society.

Vowed members, co-members, and associates of congregations are eligible. Applicants must be no older than 60 years of age as of January 1, 2016. They must commit to attend three four-day sessions: August 26-30, 2016; March 18-22, 2017; and November 3-7, 2017. Applicants must be recommended by their congregational leadership. Applications are due April 1, 2016.

Anyone who would like an invitational letter, brochure, and application form emailed directly to them is asked to contact Rita Waters, program assistant, at rwaters@sistersofmercy.org, or Kathleen Wade, program director, at kwade42@gmail.com. Additional information can be obtained by calling 301-587-0423 x 2310.

Upcoming LCWR Dates

Leading from Within Retreat

Redemptorist Retreat Center

Tucson, Arizona

January 17 — 22, 2016

Imagining Justice

Bethany Center

Lutz, Florida

March 7 — 10, 2016

LCWR New Leader Workshop

Conference Center

University of St. Mary of the Lake

Mundelein, Illinois

April 7 — 10, 2016

LCWR Assembly

Atlanta, Georgia

August 9—13, 2016

LCWR Assembly

Orlando, Florida

August 8—12, 2017

LCWR Assembly

St. Louis, Missouri

August 7—11, 2018



- LCWR statement for the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee hearing examining the FY2015 apprehensions of immigrants from Central America. LCWR (10/21/15)
- Faith leaders letter to members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees asking that they consider long-standing promises made to native American peoples concerning Indian country as they prepare a continuing resolution, some form of omnibus appropriations bill, or a “budget deal.” LCWR (10/23/15)
- Letter urging Senator Mitch McConnell to schedule a vote on Gayle Smith’s nomination as the Administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) as soon as possible. LCWR (11/5/15)
- Faith leaders’ letter to Congress urging them to allocate necessary funds for refugee assistance and resettlement in fiscal year 2016. LCWR (11/10/15)
- Faith leaders’ statement urging world leaders to support an ambitious agreement at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of parties in Paris this December that calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, encourages development of low carbon technologies, and assists populations most vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate. Marcia Allen, CSJ (11/20/15)
- Faith leaders’ letter to House and Senate Appropriators urging them to maintain funding for key violence prevention accounts at levels at or above those contained in the Senate version of the State Department, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, S.1725. LCWR (11/15/15)



Update is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally. © 2015 LCWR All rights reserved.

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Scholars to Study Anti-Trafficking Ministry of Women Religious

The University of Notre Dame's Center for Civil and Human Rights (CCHR) and the US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) are undertaking a multi-year study of the engagement of communities of women religious in the fight against modern-day slavery.

They seek to map and document those endeavors, explore the historical roots and connections, and analyze features contributing to effective efforts as well as challenges in this wide-ranging anti-trafficking work. The team envisions extensive dissemination of the resulting research through a number of avenues, including articles, an edited volume, a media-rich website, as well as a documentary film.

LCWR was invited to participate in an initial consultation about the study. The consultants, which met in South Bend from November 9-10, included project managers professor Kathleen Cummings and Ann Oestreich, IHM, as well as Kathleen Coll, SSJ; Susan Francois, CSJP; Andrea J. Lee, IHM; Ann Scholz, SSND; Anne Victory, HM; and Patricia Ann Wittberg, SC.

New Website to Help Catholics Be Salt and Light

We Are Salt and Light, a new website of the US bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, helps Catholics respond to Jesus' call to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world"



The website includes more than 60 inspiring stories of real Catholic communities being salt and light; more than 100 resources on praying, reaching out, learning and acting together; tools for growing as faith-filled disciples at home and abroad; and a one-minute introductory video, and other videos to help communities pray, reach out, learn, and act together. (www.wearesaltandlight.org)

Justice for Immigrants Coalition Convenes in Chicago

More than 300 participants from 64 dioceses gathered in Chicago from November 11-13, to participate in the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Justice for Immigrants Conference, "Moving Forward: Immigration in 2016 and Beyond." The conference focused on migration issues which will confront the church and nation in the months and years ahead.

Archbishop Blaise J. Cupich delivered the opening keynote in which he thanked those present for their tireless advocacy for people on the move. "You are key to the efforts to move our world beyond the 'globalization of indifference' of which the Holy Father spoke. You can continue to count on the Catholic Church, here in the Archdiocese of Chicago, across the nation, and globally to stand with you who are on the front lines, as together we urge the world to meet these humanitarian challenges, consistent with Christ's call to us to 'welcome the stranger.'"

The keynote was followed by a panel discussion moderated by LCWR associate director for social mission Ann Scholz, SSND. Panelists Elena Segura of the Archdiocese of Chicago's Office for Immigrant Affairs and Immigration Education; Jeanne Atkinson, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC); Clarisol Duque, chief of staff of the Chicago office of US Senator Richard Durbin; and Kevin Appleby, director of Migration Policy and Public Affairs of the USCCB, discussed prospects and strategies for compassionate immigration reform.

In addition to several other panels on policy responses to the migration of children and families from Central America, immigrant integration initiatives, and the reform of the US immigrant detention system, participants had the opportunity to participate in the weekly prayer vigil at the Broadview Processing Center. Each Friday at 7:15 AM advocates gather in front of the immigrant detention center to pray as an expression of solidarity and support for immigrants as they are being loaded onto buses for deportation.

World Leaders Convene In Paris for COP 21

World leaders will gather in Paris November 30 to December 11 for the United Nations Climate Change Conference. It will be the 21st yearly session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 11th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The objective of the 2015 conference is to achieve, for the first time in more than 20 years of UN negotiations, a binding universal agreement on climate from all the nations of the world.

The bishops of the world recently released an “Appeal to the COP21 Negotiating Parties” in which they called for transformational climate agreement and outlined 10 policy proposals. LCWR joined with faith leaders in the United States in a call to world leaders to support an ambitious agreement that calls for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, encourages development of low carbon technologies, and assists populations most vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) has pledged to organize Catholics to pray and mobilize around the pope’s *Laudato Si* message. Their plans include efforts to collect one million signatures in support of an ambitious treaty to be delivered to world leaders at the Paris summit. Through their #Pray4cop21 prayer chain GCCM is encouraging prayer for world leaders to have courage at COP21 and put into practice the message of *Laudato Si*. Finally, they are encouraging Catholics around the world to take to the streets together with the wider climate movement to demonstrate the wide spread concern about climate change and to ask governments to take bold action. More information about GCMM’s plans is available at tinyurl.com/omaoahe.



News from the UN



International Human Rights

Day is observed by the international community every year on December 10. It commemorates the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When the General Assembly adopted the Declaration, it was proclaimed a “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.” More information may be found at www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday.

International Migrants Day, December 18, is a day set aside to honor the courage of those who seek to overcome adversity and to live a better life. Today, globalization, together with advances in communications and transportation, has greatly increased the number of people who have the desire and the capacity to move to other places. Additional information is available at www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday.

News from the Vatican

The Jubilee Year of Mercy begins on December 8, 2015, the 50th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II. Resources including Pope Francis’ words about “Jesus: The Face of God’s Mercy,” “Mercy: the Beating Heart of the Gospel,” and “Mercy: Demands Justice” are available at tinyurl.com/p4ne2xl.



The World Day of Peace is celebrated annually on January 1. The theme of Pope Francis’s message for the 2016 World Day of Peace is “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace.” In his message the Holy Father urges all to replace isolation with community and indifference with solidarity. He challenges families, schools, and other institutions to foster awareness and avenues for response to problems such as intolerance, religious persecution, slavery, war, and the plight of refugees. A two-page handout for use with parishes, families, and schools is available at tinyurl.com/p9cr9ta.



ForMission Program

Applications for this two-year formation program for formators are being accepted.

The program consists of four weeklong intensive sessions at various locations throughout the US.

The first session of the class of 2018 will be June 8-16, 2016 at CTU in Chicago, IL.

Additional information is available on the RFC website www.relforcon.org.

An application packet can be obtained by calling the RFC national office at 202-827-4562.

Upcoming Webinar:

January 29, 2016 3:00 PM EST

Hearing God's Prophetic Call:

A Model for Initial and Lifelong Formation

Presenter: Brad Milunski, OFM Conv.

Additional information and registration are available at www.relforcon.org/webinar.

Annual Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Scheduled

December 14 is the third anniversary of the tragic Sandy Hook shooting.

LCWR and Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence are once again joining with the Newtown community for the National Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend, December 10-14. Partnerships like these seek to continue educating people of faith about what is working to save lives in communities across the country and to encourage elected officials to act, locally and federally. Faiths United is once again encouraging congregations, local communities, and parishes to be counted among those observing the 2015 commemoration. Event ideas, sample services, and educational flyers are available at www.decembersabbath.org.



SOLIDARITY with South Sudan

by Joan Mumaw, IHM
US Regional Development Director

The Advent season is a time to reflect on the coming of our God to be one with us. God has, in a real way, "pitched a tent" among us. Such an image is consoling to people who live in tents or in simple mud and thatch structures. The coming of our God is a sign of hope to the people of South Sudan who so yearn for peace and no more war.

Church leaders in South Sudan recently made a retreat in Rwanda desiring to learn from the experience of the church and people in that country, which is still recovering from genocide. The leaders returned humbled by what they learned and challenged to ask whether or not they had colluded in the six decades of civil war that have ravaged the peoples of the South Sudan. "We confess and repent of our wrongdoing... We have learned the need for reconciliation, forgiveness, humility, unity, and leadership. We call for prayer and fasting to change our hearts, the hearts of our leaders and the hearts of our people. Only through forgiveness and reconciliation can we live as one nation, and only through God's help can we forgive and reconcile."

Solidarity with South Sudan is blessed with a pastoral team of religious men and women who are facilitating trauma healing and peace and reconciliation workshops, helping lay and clerical leaders to deal with the trauma they have experienced and enabling them to assist the estimated 41% of the population that have experienced trauma in their lives. Their programs depend on the support of people from around the world. We invite you to join with the people of South Sudan during this Advent season in praying for peace and reconciliation. The Solidarity pastoral team with their South Sudanese colleagues has prepared a reflection booklet for Advent and Christmas that may be accessed at: ihmsisters.org/living-justly/peace-and-justice/current-issues/peace-and-global-solidarity/south-sudan-updates-and-resources/.

As of November 18, a new US organization, Friends in Solidarity, Inc. has been incorporated and will soon be able to offer tax exemption to donors. Friends is committed to supporting the work of Solidarity with South Sudan.