



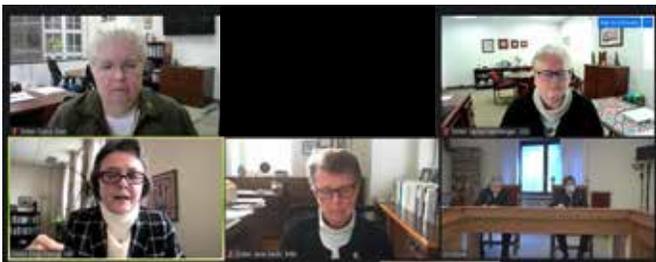
May 2021

LCWR Shares Its Members' Reality with CICLSAL

For the second year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual LCWR visitation to Rome was cancelled. On March 16, the LCWR presidency -- Elise García, OP, president; Jane Herb, IHM, president-elect; and Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ, past-president; and Carol Zinn, SSJ, executive director -- participated in a virtual meeting with the leadership of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL). Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, prefect; Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, secretary; and Carmen Ros Nortés, NSC; and Pier Luigi Nava, SMM, undersecretaries, joined the hour-long Zoom conversation, using simultaneous interpretation facilitated by LCWR.

LCWR requested this meeting to share with the leaders of the dicastery the realities faced by LCWR institutes relative to rapidly changing demographics, the impact of COVID-19 on members and chapters, and LCWR's response to these realities. Prior to the call, the four LCWR leaders sent a letter to Cardinal Braz de Aviz and Archbishop Carballo highlighting the key points for discussion, including the CARA report on member demographics shared at the August 2020 LCWR assembly.

In setting the context for the meeting, Elise observed that "Although Zoom isn't the same as being in person,



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2021 LCWR Virtual Assembly

*The Realm of Transformation:
Creating Space for the Future*

August 11, 12, 13 - Online LCWR Assembly

Arrangements are being finalized for the LCWR assembly – **The Realm of Transformation: Creating Space for the Future**. LCWR members may want to begin planning for their participation in the assembly.

Guests from Each Institute

The virtual assembly platform allows for a greater number of participants than when LCWR meets in person. With this expansion, this assembly could bring in an array of people committed to the mission of religious life and who have a passion for its future. As full participants, their voices will be present in breakout session conversations and will add to the richness of the dialogue as the assembly looks at matters that will impact the present and future of this life and its mission.

Each religious institute has the option of inviting two additional participants to the entire assembly. These participants may be women religious, members of the institute's staff, colleagues in ministry, or anyone else that the institute feels would both benefit from the assembly experience and would bring a valuable voice to the table. The leaders of each institute will determine who they wish to invite. If it is possible for the religious institute to pay the \$300 registration fee for each guest, it would help defray the costs of the assembly. If this is not possible, a donation to

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From the LCWR Executive Director

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

by Carol Zinn, SSJ — LCWR Executive Director

Each Easter season, I find myself wondering about the many encounters people had with the Risen One -- starting with Mary Magdala's run to the tomb early Easter morning. What was their experience of the talking, healing, breakfast-making, walking-on-water Jesus they had known and loved, lost, and found again, only to bid goodbye to one more time? The awe and wonder at the presence of their teacher and friend most times leaves them without words. The joy and hope at the return of their leader and guide often leaves them without understanding. The power of the resurrection transforms reality in ways that lift minds and hearts to the mystery of Love -- unconditional and forever. How full of resurrection power they became!

This 2021 Easter season invites us to that same transformation of reality. Amid the daily presence of racial violence, political paralysis, economic devastation, climate crisis, white supremacy, immigration injustice, COVID vaccines and viral variants, we are called to embrace our global sisterhood, open ourselves to porous borders, create integrative partnerships, weave webs of relationships, embody our mission in the public square and become astute in the digital world. How full of resurrection power are we?

I once witnessed resurrection power when I stepped off a train into the miracle of Lourdes. The thousands of pilgrims radiated a joy and faith that silenced me. I met a young couple on their second pilgrimage with their beautiful four-year-old daughter only able to connect with others through her eyes. Immobile, mute, deaf,



and cognitively impaired, she grabbed my heart. But it was her parents who brought me to tears when they shared that they returned to Lourdes to thank God for the miracle received at their first visit. At the shock on my face, they explained that their daughter's health was more fragile each day. But their miracle was alive in them forever as they exclaimed: "Out of all the parents in the world, God chose to give Abigail to us and we've returned to offer our thanks!" How full of resurrection power they were!

*As we continue to journey
through these uncertain and
unprecedented times
with no clarity ahead,
how full of resurrection power
can we become?*

As we continue to journey through these uncertain and unprecedented times with no clarity ahead, how full of resurrection power can we become? As we remain faithful to our gospel vocation lived through religious life, how full of resurrection power can we become? As we discern, together, the emergence of religious life and our response, how full of resurrection power can we become? As we commit to dismantling our own white privilege and domination, how full of resurrection power can we become? And as we journey into an unknown future, how full of resurrection power can we become?

Recently I encountered what resurrection power sounds like when thousands of people gathered in Brooklyn, New York and joined their voices with the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, the recipient of several Grammy awards. As you [view](#) their singing of "My Joy," notice the joy on their faces, observe the diversity of races and cultures, and allow yourself to be taken to the depth of their belief in transforming resurrection power. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.



by Mary Hughes, OP

The Discerning the Emerging Future planning group has been listening to many voices including those who work with persons in the earlier phases of incorporation into religious life. In addition, we were joined by several members of Giving Voice, a voluntary organization of women in religious life who are 50 years of age or younger. These women stirred us and radiated light and energy. As a way of enabling all LCWR members to hear these voices as well all are invited to join *Lean in Toward the Light: Another Step in Discerning the Emerging Future*.

Session 1 will be a roundtable with the leaders of three of these organizations: the National Religious Vocation Conference, Giving Voice, and the Religious Formation Conference. Participants will listen to the conversation and break into groups to reflect on what they heard. Each session will be offered twice.

- Wednesday, May 12, 2:00 – 3:15 PM EDT
- Thursday, May 20, 2:00 – 3:15 PM EDT

Session 2 will follow a similar format with four LCWR members unpacking the significance of what they heard in the first session and its implications for leaders.

- Thursday, June 17, 2:00 – 3:15 PM EDT
- Wednesday, June 23, 2:00 – 3:15 PM EDT

The presence of all leaders is encouraged and is invaluable no matter at what stage your institute is. All members have the responsibility to assure that religious life can flourish into the future and all have something to contribute to this sacred work.

LCWR members received an email message from the national office with a link to a five-minute video by the LCWR presidency explaining the importance of these two sessions. All members are encouraged to watch it to best understand the place of these sessions in the discernment process.



The LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Committee met in April and included in its agenda time with the Discerning the Emerging Future planning group to discuss the implications of the needs and the potential of LCWR institutes today.

2021 LCWR Virtual Assembly

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LCWR that is manageable for the institute is sufficient.

In addition, LCWR will be inviting the Association of Latin American Missionary Sisters (AHLMA), Giving Voice, and the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC) to each send 50 sisters to this gathering. They will join guests from the many other organizations serving religious life.

Leadership teams are encouraged to begin planning for who they wish to invite to the assembly. Instructions will be provided for how guests will register.

Volunteer Facilitators

The assembly will incorporate contemplative processing throughout the event. Leaders, invited guests, and professional facilitators attending the assembly are encouraged to volunteer to serve as facilitators of the breakout session conversations. Because of the much higher number of participants expected, LCWR anticipates a large number of volunteers will be needed. Information will be forthcoming on orientation sessions for the facilitators.

Setting Aside Time

Leaders are encouraged to think of this assembly as a retreat experience and to give themselves the three days to focus solely on the experience. If possible, they may want to consider going away to a place from which they could participate virtually in the assembly and that provides space and time away from home and the office.

LCWR Shares Its Members' Reality with CICLSAL

(continued from page 1)

this virtual conference does give us a chance to have more of an *encuentro* of the heart and not just an exchange of papers and numbers." She noted the aim of the meeting was to have an open and honest sharing of the challenges and vulnerabilities facing LCWR leaders today and to seek the congregation's support for the creative and collaborative ways LCWR members are exploring in moving forward.

Jayne shared highlights of the CARA report, underscoring the sober reality that while 80% of institutes are confident in their ability to hold a chapter and elect leadership within the next three to five years, that percentage drops to 20% in the subsequent five to 10 years. She also shared the gift of the greater ethnic and cultural diversity among younger US women religious and the focus on interculturality as a needed practice. Jane spoke to the impact of COVID-19 on LCWR institutes -- the lockdowns, illnesses, and deaths -- and the significant difficulties that postponing chapters was raising for LCWR institutes, further exacerbating demographic challenges. Carol then shared the members' collective response, describing the "emerging future" conversations that LCWR has been convening, noting the ways LCWR members are collaborating to support one another through the demographic transformation that is underway, the resources LCWR is striving to provide, and the priority LCWR members are placing on ensuring that younger members and future vocations are able to respond to God's call and the needs of God's people and planet well into the future.

Archbishop Carballo expressed gratitude for LCWR's honesty in sharing the realities of US religious life and then spoke of the importance of distinguishing between optimism and hope. He said he did not hear much to be optimistic about in the LCWR report but sensed a profound hope, which is at the heart of our Christian faith, for the future of religious life. "We accompany you in that hope." The archbishop noted that CICLSAL

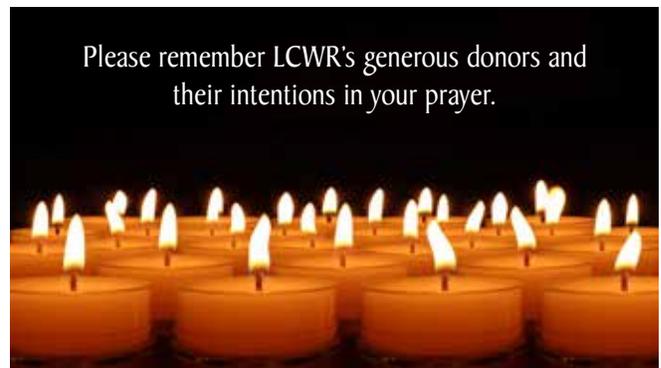


is aware of the extended impact of COVID-19 on chapters and is looking at possible steps that would be helpful for congregations and leaders.

Cardinal Braz de Aviz noted that these realities -- aging, demographic changes, and COVID-19 -- are evident in religious life in other global areas. Sister Carmen echoed this observation and stressed the importance of accompaniment through these challenging times, moving forward with a shared hope for the future of consecrated life. Cardinal Braz de Aviz spoke of this as a time that is akin to the moment when Israel was in peril with no land, no freedom, and they were almost destroyed. Because of a few and their sincere perseverance, however, they found a pathway forward. This is a great opportunity to keep the faith. He said, "In this moment when we can't do everything, let's do what's possible." He then noted Pope Francis' astounding visit to Iraq at age 84 as an example of going where no pope had ever gone before to show his love for and solidarity with the near-decimated Christian community and to reach across in brotherhood to Muslim leaders.



Although the conversation was only an hour long -- with the challenges of electronic communications, language interpretation, and cultural differences -- the sharing was open, honest, and sisterly/brotherly. It was also impactful, strengthening relations across the Atlantic -- and the church -- for the common good.



NBSC and LCWR Dialogues

Members of the National Black Sisters Conference have been meeting for conversations with the members of the LCWR national board. LCWR past-president Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ shares her experience of these exchanges.

As I reflect on the latest in a series of dialogues between members of the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC) and members of LCWR, I am profoundly moved by where our journey has taken us thus far. The depth and breadth of our conversations, coupled with our willingness to be vulnerable in telling our stories and life experiences, has enabled us to create a sacred space where we receive one another's truth in holy disquietude.

In this soul work of unearthing centuries-old misconceptions of American history and our unconscious complicity in colluding with systems and structures that support racism, we are forging new pathways to work together, conference to conference and sister to sister. Trust-tending and relationship-building, coupled with our faith in the Holy Spirit working within and among us, fuels our urgency and shared commitment in working for racial equality.

Reflections on LCWR Leadership Community Anti-Racism Work

Members of the LCWR national board and staff, as well as the regional chairs have been participating in monthly sessions on racism led by Dr. Kathy Obear. Three of the participants reflect on the experience.

Maureen O'Connor, OSF
LCWR National Board and Treasurer

As I reflect on the racism sessions facilitated by Kathy Obear, I have experienced a deep sense of gratitude and awe. The women in this group are not all well acquainted with one another other and yet gather to share on an issue that is deeply personal and sensitive. As with any diverse group, we are at

very different stages of experience and understanding of racism, white privilege, and white fragility. Yet the depth of sharing, the trust, and the vulnerability that are developing with each session amazes me. When I couple this with the fact that all are Zoom gatherings, it seems even more unbelievable. Truly this is the work of the Spirit.

Before the initial session, I was apprehensive because of my lack of knowledge and insight on the topic. Although I consider myself a novice in these discussions, in just a few months, I have learned a great deal about racism. I experience a gentleness in our interactions even when the material is uncomfortable. The next challenge is to keep learning and then sharing these learnings in ministry and other settings.

Renée Daigle, MSC
Region 5 Chair

The last session on racism with Kathy Obear began with a prayer in memory of the eight people, six of whom were women of Asian descent, who had recently been killed in Atlanta. Although we talked in general about racism in our previous sessions, our focus and examples were on racism toward people of African descent. This session especially touched my heart because we learned a bit of the personal stories of each victim.

Our conversations also expanded to include biases we hold in so many different areas beyond race. For me, this session was powerful because we based our reflections and sharing on our perception of a real-life, current incident rather than thinking back to the way we grew up, role playing, or talking in generalities. I was shocked at how much I had not noticed within myself even after all the attention and awareness I have given recently to racism. Kathy's probing

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Reflections on LCWR Leadership Community Anti-Racism Work

(continued from page 3)

questions helped me continue to identify my patterns, assumptions, and biased ways of thinking and acting, and to own my “white privilege.” I have such a long way to go and feel blessed and challenged by this opportunity to grow and learn.

Mary Hughes, OP
Director of Transitional Services

Prayer changes things. When the LCWR national board, region chairs, and office ministers began its most recent monthly session on racism with Kathy Obear, we opened with prayer focused on the eight victims of gun violence in Atlanta, Georgia. Six of the victims were Asian or Pacific Islanders. We saw their photos and learned why they were in the massage studio that day. Most were workers. There was a recently married couple with a small child. They came to treat themselves.

What changed at that session? We did. Through the power of the prayer...

Our definition of racism was stretched to include the many who do not look like those of the dominant culture. Their faces, names, and stories made the violence feel more personal. These victims were no longer strangers; they were our neighbors and friends. Some participants in the session had persons of Asian heritage in their families. A board member is of Philippine descent. Our work, both personal and communal, seemed more urgent. Conversations went deeper. Grief, embedded with the suffering of those

victimized solely for bearing differing facial features or speaking a language other than English more fluently, moved our hearts.

The dates below are tentative due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will be kept up to date on plans as they progress.

All LCWR activities remain virtual due to the priority of health and safety concerns

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Assembly
Virtual
August 11 - 13, 2021

Leading from Within Retreat
Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona
January 16 - 21, 2022

LCWR New Leaders Workshop
Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet
St. Louis, Missouri
March 31 - April 3, 2022

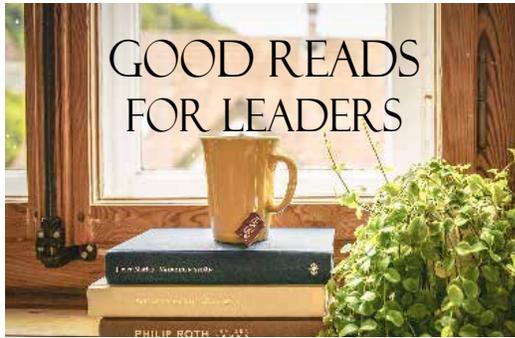
Imagining Justice
Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center
Marriottsville, Maryland
April 25 - 28, 2022

LCWR Assembly
St. Louis, Missouri
August 9 - 12, 2022

**What Could I Have Done?!?!
PAIRS & Engaging Skills pgs. 49-50**

- **P: PAN**
- **A: ASK**
- **I: INTERRUPT**
- **R: RELATE**
- **S: SHARE**

The image shows a presentation slide on the left with a list of five items: P: PAN, A: ASK, I: INTERRUPT, R: RELATE, and S: SHARE. To the right of the slide is a grid of approximately 25 small video windows showing various participants in a virtual meeting.



God's Hotel: A Doctor, A Hospital, and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of Medicine

by Victoria Sweet

Recommended by Gemma Doll, OP

Dr. Sweet writes a memoir of her medical practice and the lessons she learned from her patients. The book fired up the inspiration I had for the healing ministry when young.

She accepted a position at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco during the time of the HIV epidemic and rampant drug use. The hospital was the place of last resort for homeless, chronically ill, poor, addicted, and the abandoned ill.

Dr. Sweet looked to Hildegard of Bingen for key elements of healing:

- Time to recover from within
- Attention and respect to reclaim one's own human dignity
- Nutrition to provide the building blocks for physical well-being
- Relationship and caring which gives the other autonomy and can break a caregiver's heart

The human person is not a machine. Her writing implicitly critiques modern medicine with its timed visits and fee structures. Efficiency holds top value with little regard given for personal relationships. Instead, she honors the concept that spirituality could undergird modern medicine.

But most compelling about *God's Hotel* is Dr. Sweet's own inner transformation. She became more open to learning, more human, more attuned to her patients, more engaged with mystery through her patients.

Sweet's memoir demonstrates the deeper values to be found in ordinary experiences, especially living with the stress of a pandemic.

I especially honor healthcare workers today who go the extra mile in caring, in healing, in humoring those desperately clinging to life. We as leaders bring our brokenness to create new and deeper paths across both spiritual and political divides. Just like Dr. Sweet, we surrender to what is unchangeable, but always hold on to hope for healing and resilience. Both take time.

Translations Available of Article from Winter 2021 Occasional Papers

"Seeing with New Eyes: The Inner Work of Transformation Needed for These Times" an article by Ted Dunn from the Winter 2021 edition of *Occasional Papers* has been translated into German and Korean and is available on the LCWR [website](#):

- *Mit neuen Augen sehen: Das innere Wirken der Transformation Notwendig für diese Zeiten* von Ted Dunn
- 새로운 눈으로 바라보기-이 시대에 필요한 변모를 위한 내면 작업 -테드 던 도입

Translation provided by the Congregation of Divine Providence, Wakefield, Rhode Island.

Responding to Crisis at Southern US Border

LCWR communities continue to respond to the increasing needs at the southern border with the presence of unaccompanied children arriving in our country. To date, LCWR members have provided more than 200 volunteers to serve either at the border or to be available for the centers that will be opened in various places throughout the country. Catholic Charities remains in critical need of volunteers especially for the centers that are not yet open, but when opened will immediately need help.

Many LCWR religious institutes also have made significant financial contributions to Catholic Charities USA for this current situation. The financial resources needed for this crisis are significant and CCUSA is very grateful for the help women religious are providing.

LCWR National Office Changes to Occur in Fall

The book of Ecclesiastes states that there is a time for everything under the sun. This September will usher in a time of change at the LCWR national office. Both Mary Hughes, OP, director of transitions services, and Marie McCarthy, SP, associate director of programs, will complete their time of service.

Message from Mary Hughes

In late September 2014, with the support of a generous grant from the GHR Foundation, I joined LCWR as the director of transitional services. My charge was to accompany, support, and be a resource to small institutes that might be preparing for completion of their historical mission. During these years we began some very sacred journeys together. In addition to opportunities to speak about transitional services, many of you invited me into the life of your community. You shared your history, your fragility, and your concern for your members. I encountered much holiness.



For more than a year we have been immersed in a world in which nothing is the same as it once was. We have been in conversations about both religious life and personal discernments. My own discernment has brought me to the decision to leave my ministry in transitional services and consider my own transition to other possibilities that have emerged.

As I leave LCWR I hold deep gratitude in my heart for this organization. I have been part of it as a member, as a member of the presidency, and then as a co-worker with the incredibly gifted women who do all the behind-the-scenes work to make things happen. I have been very privileged. Know that I will continue to hold you in my heart and in my prayer.

Message from Marie McCarthy, SP

My ministry at LCWR began in October 2021. I arrived along with superstorm Sandy and in the midst of LCWR's involvement in the doctrinal assessment by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. As associate director of programs I have had the privilege of working with the national office, the leadership of the conference, and the members in developing resources that would help strengthen the capacity for transformational leadership among us.



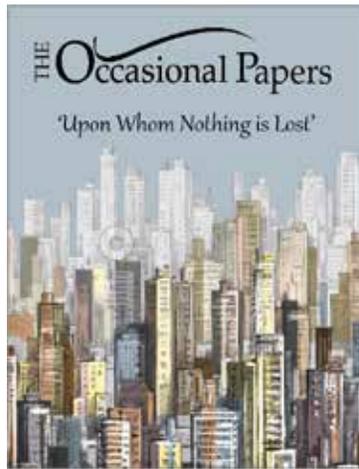
These past nine years have passed quickly and been filled with adventure, joy, wonderful, rich relationships, and a continued deepening of my own call to religious life. It has been a remarkable gift to work with so many LCWR members, to share in your dedication to religious life and your commitment to service.

I leave LCWR as we are about to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic and the shifts that the virus demanded in how we do our work. As we move forward there will necessarily be a rethinking of all the ways we offer services to our members. New programs and new ways of responding to members' needs will be called for. I believe that new eyes and new ways of thinking will be helpful in that process. I have learned much during my years at LCWR and will be leaving far richer than when I came.

The next steps in my journey will take me back to Indiana and a renewed embeddedness in my own congregation. My life there will continue to be blessed because of my time with LCWR and each of you. While I will no longer be involved in a daily way in the work of LCWR I will be holding that work and each of you in my heart. I hope that the days ahead will provide opportunities for our paths to cross. If there is any way that I can be of service to you in the future, please do not hesitate to ask.

Order Summer 2021 *Occasional Papers*

The Summer 2021 issue of *Occasional Papers*, which explores how to live closely attuned to the work of the Divine in the world, is entitled “**Upon Whom Nothing is Lost.**” This phrase comes from a Henry James essay, “The Art of Fiction,” written for authors encouraging them to be people upon



whom nothing is lost. He urged writers to be attentive observers of the subtle movements of the world around them and the world inside of themselves. This same call is before women religious today — to be people who notice everything. The world today needs people to be aware of what is happening, to be curious, to explore possibilities. This way of living requires that one put aside assumptions, be open-minded, and go beyond the surface of what one encounters to see what lies below. In this time of chaos, uncertainty, and deep polarization in the world and our nation, the willingness to stretch one’s perceptive capacities is critical.

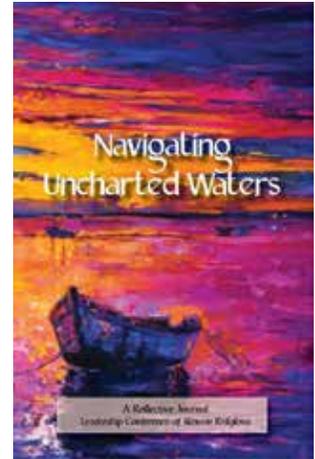
Included in this issue will be interviews with author and speaker **Joan Chittister, OSB** as well as with the founder and executive director of MIT’s Community Innovators Lab **Dayna Cunningham**. Other articles will focus on releasing old patterns that limit perceptions, the importance of continuously expanding minds, perceiving from multiple cultural perspectives, understanding the evolutionary perspective, living in the midst of diversity. The issue also offers practices that place oneself in the heart of the world.

Orders for this issue may be placed [online here](#). Discounts are available for orders of 100 or more copies. **Orders must be placed by May 28.** [Subscriptions are also available.](#) Questions about orders should be directed to [Bianca Louis](#).

Extra Copies of Two Recent LCWR Publications Available

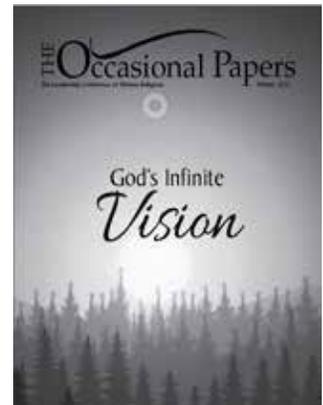
2021 Reflection Book

The 2021 LCWR reflection book, ***Navigating Uncharted Waters*** is in the mail. Some extra copies are still available at the cost of \$6.00 each. Discounted prices are available for orders larger than 10 copies. Revenue from this LCWR project helps defray the costs of the resources and programs the conference provides its members. [Orders may be placed here.](#)



Winter 2021 *Occasional Papers*

Some extra copies of the Winter 2021 issue of LCWR’s journal, *Occasional Papers*, entitled, ***God’s Infinite Vision***, are available [for purchase online](#). Cost is \$5.00 per copy.



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Conversations on Religious Life for the Future

On April 11, 90 women religious and associates coming from Giving Voice, the Leadership Collaborative, and LCWR participated in the second of three conversations in a series entitled, "Religious Life for the Future."

Two LCWR members who are participating share below their reflections on this second conversation.

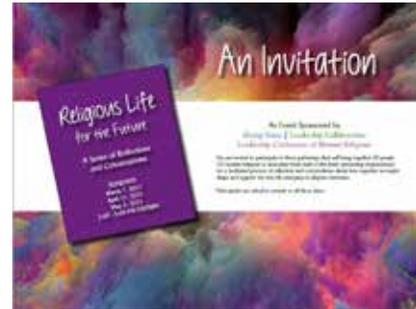
Florence Enechukwu, MSHR
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Reflecting on our conversations concerning religious life for the future, I sensed a great energy, passion, readiness, and urgency to respond to the needs of our world. However, many unanswered questions emerged as we listened with our hearts.

- How can we broaden our collaborative efforts beyond the vowed religious groups? This will mean changing our inner disposition to inclusivity in all its forms — discernment, building relationships, and actions in solidarity.
- How can we sift through the challenges to freely respond to the needs and to live authentically in this time of upheaval?
- How can we overcome our fears (obstacles) and lack of trust (economic jeopardy) and move forward in collaboration?
- What are we called to in this time?

These honest reflective questions invite us to go deeper as we engage in our collaborative search for new ways of living our religious life today and what that might look like in the future.

We are not called to re-invent the wheels of the past, but rather to invoke the spirit of our courageous founders/ foundresses and foremothers, who have gone before us and accompany us today. The spirit of the Risen Christ is alive in us as we engage in this sacred discernment.



Andrea Westkamp, OSB
Bristow, Virginia

Getting together with other women religious to share about religious life instills hope in me. Religious life is a mystery. Although we live it, we still sense the many intangibles about it. Its future is just another intangible!

One of the questions posed at our second session was, "What if we live this moment of upheaval in religious life as if we chose it?" In preparing for this session, I hoped that we would skip this question. It frightened me. I asked myself, "What would happen if we chose upheaval?"

As I enjoyed the different viewpoints shared in the session, the following insight rose within me: Religious life is something we embody and therefore give shape to with our lives in the present moment. One sister commented, "If we choose it, we take ownership." Yes, if we choose it, we shape it!

As we sifted through the responses of the groups, the theme of closer collaboration surfaced. I felt relieved that our challenging question of upheaval guided us to collaborative action in the present moment. I am looking forward to our May session.

LCWR Calls for Respect for and Appreciation of Diversity

LCWR issued a statement urging respect for and appreciation of the diversity that exists within the human family that often appears to be diminishing in



US society. News reports these recent weeks are replete with stories and images of violence committed against people of color and persons across the spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Recognizing that the work of understanding, respecting, and deeply appreciating diversity is a constant challenge, LCWR's statement pledges the conference to work for inclusion and equity for all persons. The work is difficult. It demands interior freedom to come to a place where one can value the differences — even when not able to fully comprehend them. The work demands a willingness to stand in solidarity with all who become targets of attack because of diversity. It demands the courage and perseverance to stand up and raise one's voice aloud for equity for all.

The conference shared the statement with its members as a call to examine one's own perceptions, feelings, and actions, asking: What mindsets need to die within us so that we see humanity's diversity in its fullness? What stones do we need to help roll away so that our communities leave the tomb of past perceptions and judgment of differences? With whom are we called to stand to proclaim that human life is ever more glorious when diversity is welcomed and cherished? Members were encouraged to share the statement in whatever ways it could be helpful to them and to the members of their institutes.

Laudato Si' Action Platform to Launch May 24

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development plans a "soft launch" of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP) to coincide with the completion of the fifth-anniversary year of the encyclical. May 24 will mark the official invitation to the universal church to join the seven-year journey toward the integral ecology envisioned in *Laudato Si'*.



The plan is to mobilize seven sectors within the global Catholic community: families, parishes and dioceses, educational institutions, health care centers, the economy, organizations and groups, and religious orders. These sectors will take concrete steps toward seven goals: responding to the cry of Earth, responding to the cry of the poor, building ecological economies, adopting simple lifestyles, creating ecological education, recovering ecological spirituality, and promoting community action and advocacy. The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) and the Union of Superiors General (USG) will be coordinating the efforts of religious orders at the international level. LCWR staff members and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) are working collaboratively to support congregations of religious in the United States. In addition, the [Global Catholic Climate Movement \(GCCM\)](#) and the US-based [Catholic Climate Covenant \(CCC\)](#) will be providing assistance to all seven sectors.

The initiative will build on what communities are already doing and should be simple and gradual enough to accommodate different contexts, planning cycles and priorities. Each year, on the feast of St. Francis, LSAP will welcome a new cohort to the journey. The current timetable calls for a "hard launch" of the project and a public announcement of members of the first cohort on October 4, 2021. Organizers hope to double the number of institutional participants each year to create the "critical mass" needed for the radical societal transformation invoked by Pope Francis.



LCWR exercised its voice in the public square through the following actions:

- Endorsement of HR 1603, the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which would establish a path to legalization for undocumented farmworkers and their immediate family members and reform the H-2A temporary agricultural worker program. LCWR (3/12/21)
- Endorsement of the GRACE Act which would protect and restore the US resettlement program by setting a minimum refugee admissions goal to 125,000 and increasing congressional oversight over the administration's resettlement program. LCWR (3/12/21)
- Letter of support for the passage of the Dream and Promise Act. LCWR (3/12/21)
- Letter to President Biden and Congress asking them to issue targeted sanctions against businesses owned by the military and work with other countries to impose a global arms embargo to support the nonviolent resistance to the military coup in Myanmar. LCWR (3/17/21)
- Letter to World Bank Group executive directors calling on the group to immediately adopt a whole-of-institution commitment to end all types of support for fossil fuels, both direct and indirect. LCWR (3/17/21)
- Letter to the UN Security Council asking them to hold Myanmar militia and security forces accountable for human rights atrocities, particularly against women. LCWR (3/17/21)
- Letter to House and Senate leadership asking them to enact paid family leave. LCWR (3/18/21)
- Joined a coalition of national Catholic organizations, Catholic Cares to promote acceptance of all three COVID-19 vaccines and their equitable distribution. LCWR (3/19/21)
- Letter to Senator Jeff Merkley and Representative Alan Lowenthal supporting their Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act which calls for real solutions by reducing throwaway plastics and encouraging producer responsibility. LCWR (3/20/21)
- Statement of the Asian American Christian Collaborative and other leaders in the Christian faith community condemning the horrific crimes in Atlanta as well as the broader increase of hate and violence direct towards Asian Americans. Ann Scholz, SSND (3/22/21)
- Letter to President Biden urging him to immediately sign a new, revised FY21 refugee admissions goal of 62,500 and restore regional allocations based on vulnerability and need. LCWR (3/23/21)
- Letter to President Biden outlining a comprehensive root causes strategy towards Northern Triangle Countries. LCWR (3/24/21)
- LCWR statement condemning racism and sexism in all their harmful forms whether the violent acts of white supremacists and misogynists against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. LCWR (3/23/21)
- Letter to President Biden calling on his administration to begin the long overdue process of phasing out the use of detention in our immigration system. LCWR (3/30/21)
- Letter to US Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) providing recommendations to assist in the fair and timely processing of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) requests. LCWR (3/25/21)
- Letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas asking that he end programs and practices that entangle local law enforcement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including the 287(g) program, Secure Communities, and ICE detainers. LCWR (3/28/21)
- Letter from religious leaders calling for a "People's Vaccine," that is available to all as a global common good. Ann Scholz, SSND (3/29/21)
- Letter to President Biden urging him to establish a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission to examine the deeply rooted effects of institutional racism and to make a serious attempt to address how they impact law and policy today. Ann Scholz, SSND (3/30/21)
- Letter to Melissa Rogers, executive director, and Josh Dickson, deputy director of the White House Office of Faith-Based Partnerships recommending the establishment of an Office of Faith-Based Engagement within the US Department of Defense. LCWR (3/30/21)
- Letter to Congress in support of the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate,

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LCWR Sign-Ons and Letters

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Assault, and Threats to Equality Act (NO HATE Act) that would improve hate crime statistics and promote a better response to hate crime within communities. LCWR (3/30/21)

- Letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas and Acting Director Renaud urging them to address implementation issues that caused serious harm to Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure, (DED) holders under the previous administration and is continuing under the Biden administration. LCWR (3/30/21)
- Letter to Congress and the Biden administration urging them to close the first 10 immigration detention centers and move the nation towards humane treatment and effective community alternatives to detention. LCWR (3/31/21)
- Letter urging President Biden to institute active measures to stem the smuggling to Mexico of weapons purchased in the United States and prevent the federally licensed exportation of rifles and pistols from US companies to police and military units known to collude with organized crime or violate the human rights of Mexicans and migrants. LCWR (4/1/21)
- Letter to Biden administration urging President Biden to immediately re-designate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Haiti due to the current extraordinary and temporary conditions in the country. LCWR (4/12/21)
- Statement in solidarity with Rise St. James and in opposition to the construction of a \$9.4 billion industrial plastics complex by Formosa Industries. LCWR (4/13/21)
- Letter to members of Congress expressing strong support for the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act (NO BAN Act) (HR 1333). LCWR (4/13/21)
- Letter urging the Department of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to prioritize conflict prevention and peace-building in the US government's COVID-19 strategy and foreign assistance funding provided for in the American Rescue Plan in tandem with health and humanitarian aid. LCWR (4/14/21)
- Letter to House and Senate leadership urging them to support the rebuilding and strengthening of the refugee resettlement program. LCWR (4/13/21)

CSW 65 Delivers Robust Blueprint on Strengthening Women's Participation in Public Life

Against the backdrop of a global pandemic, world leaders issued a strong pledge for women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life and the elimination of violence at the closing of this year's 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The two-week-long gathering ended with the adoption by UN Member States of the [Agreed Conclusions](#), its main outcome document, which recognizes the need to significantly accelerate the pace of progress to ensure women's full participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and the public sector. It also recognizes that temporary special measures, such as quotas, and increased political will are needed as an enabling pathway to this goal.



The Agreed Conclusions acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities that perpetuate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, as well as racism, stigmatization, and xenophobia. Yet, [recent data](#) show that women have been mostly absent from COVID-19 government task forces around the world, women make up only 24% of the 225 task force members examined across 137 countries.

They also make strong recommendations for concrete measures, which can enable women's role in decision-making, including: changing laws and policies that discriminate against women and hinder their equal participation in public life; innovative measures to promote women as leaders, executives and managers, in all areas; setting targets and timelines to achieve gender balance in all government branches using measures such as quotas, appointments, or training programs; and encouraging political parties to nominate as many women as men candidates and promote equal leadership in their structures.

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CSW 65 Delivers Robust Blueprint

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Young women are particularly underrepresented in public life and disproportionately excluded from consultations on issues that affect them, despite being involved in activities that call for broader change and address issues such as climate change and poverty. Women under 30 years of age make up fewer than one percent of parliamentarians globally. Recognizing this, the commission agreed on the need for measures that target them: from access to education, technology, and skills development, to mentorship programs, increased financial support, and protection from violence; and recognized the benefits of early exposure to women leaders as role models, as well as of legislative and policy-making spaces.

Recognizing women's important role as agents of change in responding to climate change, the agreement also stresses the need to reinforce women's presence and leadership in all places where decisions on climate change mitigation and adaptation are taken, and to ensure that related policies, plans, and programs account for the specific needs of women and girls.

LCWR Joins Solidarity with Seafarers Campaign

Over 1.5 million seafarers work on ships that bring goods and medicine to ports in the United States and around the world. Their work is critical to the economic health and well-being of all. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the industry hard. As governments around the world have closed their borders to contain the coronavirus, many of these seafarers have been literally stuck at sea.

The more than 400,000 seafarers caught up in this crisis are enduring extreme hardship. Some have had their contracts extended against their wills. Many are unable to return to their homes. The Coalition of Catholic Organizations against Human Trafficking (CCOAH) joins with Catholics around the globe in encouraging governments to designate seafarers key essential workers and to provide them with priority access to vaccines.

Pope Francis teaches: "The life of sailors or fishermen and their families is very difficult. Sometimes they are victims of forced labor or are left behind in distant ports ... Without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve. Let us pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families."

Join Catholics around the globe in committing to stand up for the human rights of seafarers. The [Solidarity with Seafarers Campaign](#) will launch May 22, 2021, National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea, and run through June 25, 2021, the Day of the Seafarer which recognizes the invaluable contribution seafarers make to everybody's wellbeing, often at great personal cost to themselves and their families. Among the actions recommended to support seafarers:

Spread Pope Francis' concern and prayer for seafarers, fishermen and their families by posting the [pope's video](#) on social media and encourage others to share. Help prevent labor trafficking and support these essential workers. [Sign the petition](#) urging Walmart to sign the Neptune Declaration for Seafarer Welfare and Crew Change. Help prevent labor trafficking and support these essential workers.

Access prayers, bulletin inserts, social media materials and background information [here](#).

The ministries of [Stella Maris](#) and the [Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America \(AOS-USA\)](#) provide port chaplains and volunteers who minister to seafarers and fishers throughout the country and around the world. They offer everything from a listening ear and spiritual guidance for seafarers struggling after months at sea, to ensuring that the dignity and rights of seafarers and fishers are upheld by monitoring for any signs of unsafe work conditions or labor exploitation.





Webinar:

Recognizing Jesus in the Journey of Racial Healing

Utilizing a lens of racial justice, this webinar will wrestle with the history and lessons of Jesuit slaveholding and the continued need to break down silence and complicity. The session will focus on community approaches to restoration, reconciliation, and mutual transformation.

Webinar offered by staff at the Slavery, History, Memory, and Reconciliation Project with the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

Wednesday, April 28 at 2:00 PM (ET)

The webinar is open to all. More information and required registration are available [here](#).

Programs and Operations Manager Positions Open

The Religious Formation Conference (RFC) invites applications for two full-time positions to advance the [mission](#) of the conference:

- **Programs Manager** – position description may be found [here](#).
- **Operations Manager** - position description may be found [here](#).

The searches will remain open until the positions are filled, but preference will be given to applicants whose materials reach the conference by **Wednesday, May 5**. Inquiries about the position can be sent via email to rfc@relforcon.org. Applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, and list of three references. Materials can be sent by email to rfc@relforcon.org or by mail to:

Religious Formation Conference
5401 S. Cornell Ave, Suite 304
Chicago, IL 60615

Storymap Showcases Religious Life

The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) released its [Religious Life Today Storymap](#), providing the public a highly visual, compelling way to understand contemporary realities and trends among those entering religious life. The site brings to life the data from the 2020 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life. Institutes are invited to scroll through this new resource, add links from institutes' websites and social media platforms, and share it with members.

Summer Institute Information

NRVC will be hosting its annual [Summer Institute](#) workshops online July 12-28. Currently registration is available for the following workshops.

July 12-16

[Orientation Program for New Vocation Directors](#)

July 19-21

[Behavioral Assessment 1](#)

July 23-24

[Ethical Issues in Vocation and Formation Ministry](#)

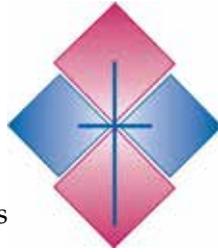
July 26-28

[Is It Cultural, Generational, or Family of Origin? Issues in Candidate Assessment](#)



Update from NRRO

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), in collaboration with the Avila Institute of Gerontology, will offer a new webinar *Flourishing in a Season of Surrender* on May 11. As the percentage of elderly vowed religious continues to increase, religious life is at a crossroads. With extensive experience working with religious institutes, author and clinical psychologist, Ted Dunn will help participants explore “mature surrender” and the characteristics of a purposeful life.



More information about this free, one-hour presentation is available [here](#) with instructions for registration.

Former Journal Relaunches

Review for Religious, a journal for religious life, relaunches this June with a fresh approach, peer-reviewed content, and book reviews focused on religious life and the challenges and contexts of the contemporary world. The first issue features a contribution by Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, “Religious Life from Vatican II to *Fratelli Tutti*.” With the journal comes a [website](#) that includes news, submitted essays, and discussion of art to engage and inspire. Published by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, *Review for Religious* draws upon a 70-year history while it engages with the contemporary world.

- Information, a flyer to share, and a sample table of contents, may be found [here](#).
- Digital and/or print subscriptions are [available now](#).
- A Twitter account to follow is [here](#).

Any questions about the journal may be directed to managing editor [David Rohrer Budiash, Ph.D.](#)



AARC Offers Webinar on Religious Archives

In the listening sessions held in Fall 2020, some LCWR members expressed concern about the future of their congregational and charism family archives.

LCWR plans to work with the Association of Archivists for Religious Congregations (AARC) to provide both education and on-site assistance for LCWR members desiring help with their planning for archive care and preservation. LCWR shared information on an upcoming AARC webinar in an April 19 email.

LCWR’s next steps will be a survey to determine the range and scope of interest/need among LCWR members for this topic. The development of on-site professional assistance is part of the plan in conjunction with AARC.

News from the UN

International Day of Families is observed on May 15 and provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families and to increase knowledge of the social, economic, and demographic processes affecting families.



World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development is celebrated on May 21. In 2001 UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and in December 2002 the UN General Assembly declared the day an opportunity to deepen understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together better.



by Joan Mumaw, IHM
President
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The pandemic is challenging us all, but especially people living in the developing world. South Sudan just emerged from another lockdown, reimposed in early February. The schools and all public gathering places have been closed awaiting re-opening from the government.

Does this adage sound familiar? “We may all be on the same ocean, but we are not all in the same boat.” A small shipment of vaccines from AstraZenica has arrived in the country. Corruption affects the distribution intended for healthcare workers and those over 65 with co-morbidities.

Friends in Solidarity, with the help of women religious and Bon Secours Mercy Health System, has funded the purchase of nine oxygen concentrators to hopefully prevent people from more serious complications of the disease. Hospitals are ill-equipped to care for those needing intensive care.

“Friends of Friends” have provided humanitarian aid to enable Solidarity to provide food to those in neighborhoods where people are hungry due to lack of work during the pandemic or are elderly and disabled. There are also many widows with children who are suffering for lack of food to feed their children. We are grateful for this support.

Margaret Scott, RNDM, the principal of the Solidarity Teacher Training College (TTC) since its beginning in 2009, has returned to New Zealand. Farewells were simple, yet, profound for this gifted woman who has transformed teacher training and the lives of many students in South Sudan.

Solidarity continues to seek men and women religious to volunteer for the mission in South Sudan. The greatest need is for tutors for the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI). Solidarity also welcomes newcomers to the TTC and to the agricultural training project and to anyone interested in assisting with administrative services. For more information contact, jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com.

Friends in Solidarity will celebrate International Nurses Day on May 12 with a short webinar celebrating the work at the CHTI in Wau, South Sudan. Registration is available at this [link](#).



We live in a world filled with the action of God’s creating love and are partners of that divine activity in a time when major social and global change creates both enormous challenge and significant opportunity.

-LCWR Call 2015-2022