



March 2021

## LCWR Leadership Group Continues Work on Dismantling Racism

The LCWR national board, region chairs, and office staff gather monthly for sessions on being change agents for racial justice. The sessions are led by Dr. Kathy Obear, author of *But I'm Not Racist*, which the group is reading as part of its work together. The book can be downloaded for free [here](#).

These sessions are part of the five-year commitment entitled, "Spirit Call Within a Call," made by LCWR in 2020 and are considered a strategic way to continue the work of addressing the systemic nature of white privilege and supremacy. The regions will also engage this approach in their upcoming meetings. As this process unfolds, LCWR members are also invited to use any of the materials provided by Dr. Obear, with their own members.

Three participants in the sessions share below brief reflections on their experience thus far.

**Betsy Pawlicki, OP**  
*Chair, LCWR Region 8*

*"Rend your heart to make your heart whole." --Jan Richardson*

While we gather on Zoom, it is so much more than another Zoom meeting. The LCWR board, region chairs, and office ministers have been meeting with Dr. Kathy Obear, an organization consultant, trainer, and guide. These gatherings have assisted the group to deepen

**Session #2 Outcomes**

1. Engage in authentic, meaningful dialogue about issues of race and racism.
2. More reflections on racialized socialization
3. Reflections on current and desired capacities, current activities
4. Recognize racist microaggressions in the moment, including code racist comments.
5. (Identify common racist attitudes and behaviors of some people.)

◀ A slide from Dr. Obear's presentation.

▼ The LCWR board, region chairs, and staff



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*From the LCWR Presidency*

## Balancing Chaos With Life-Giving Blessings

Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ — LCWR Past President

The coronavirus continues to wreak havoc on our lives – in body, mind, and soul. New strains continue to pop up around the world and new vaccines or boosters are being created to counter them.

Most of us can name the tremendous impact this virus has had on us – loss, grief, sorrow, pain, separation, limited mobility beyond our homes and offices, zooming, emailing, texting, etc. We have found ways to stay in relationship with one another, albeit not the same as being together in the same place and space.

May I suggest that during this season of Lent, we focus on balancing the chaos of leading during COVID with the life-giving blessings that have also been a part of this experience. I will share just three blessings that continue to impact my own leadership and remind me of the good that can come from what is difficult.

- In March 2020, COVID stopped all travel and shut down life as we knew it. Zoom became a constant companion and enabled us to keep treasured connections with others throughout LCWR. These relationships are invaluable because we are in this together, seeking wisdom and insight as we lead our respective congregations and remain attentive to what is emerging in religious life itself.
- The death of George Floyd in May 2020 was my awakening. I devoured any talk shows where African Americans were speaking about being



Black in the United States. I read two books that have significantly changed how I understand my own life as a white woman religious: *White Fragility* and *But I'm Not A Racist*. I watched movies written, directed, and acted by Black men and women. I listened. I joined other sisters in online sessions with trained facilitators on implicit bias and white privilege. I continue this life-long journey of understanding white privilege and the devastating consequences for all persons of color. I am grateful for the sisters who are on this journey with me as we seek to rid ourselves of all that is racist within and around us.

- As COVID continued its devastation from March through the present, I have learned once again how important relationships are in my life: my relationship with God, self, sisters in my congregation, and all others in my life. Leading from “afar” – through emails, phone calls, and Zoom is a poor second to the personal interactions that are so much

a part of my style as a leader. And yet, this has enabled creativity to flourish in finding new ways and points of connection that strengthen our bonds regardless of the distance and physical separation we are all experiencing.

I pray that each of us finds the silver linings in our lives from 2020; carrying just the burdens and chaos of this past year can leave us off-kilter and disconnected. What energizes and propels us in this present moment is our faith, companionship, hope, and trust in God, who continually calls and invites us into mystery unfolding.



## LCWR Leadership Group Works on Dismantling Racism

*(continued from page 1)*

and realize a common commitment to address white privilege, dominance, supremacy, and racism to meet the needs of the diverse populations women religious serve. We will continue to meet monthly through August. This is certainly not my first experience with anti-racism training. But, having only just begun this process, it is proving to be the most practical, genuine, and significant training. I have asked myself how and why this might be so. I really do not know most of the other participants very well. And I had never heard of Kathy Obear and her work. So, why have the conversations been so rich? And the personal learnings so significant?

Dr. Obear presents relevant information and invites us to consider what it has to do with us — our unique experiences as individuals and leaders of congregations of women religious. She has created a setting where we have been able to — deeply, honestly, and vulnerably — engage in conversation, questions, and challenge. We risk rending our hearts, together, so that we may become whole. And help our conference, congregations, and others do the same.

### Marie McCarthy, SP

*LCWR Associate Director for Programs*

The notion of “privileged ignorance” caught my attention and touched my heart. I am becoming aware of how, when I hear stories of racist aggression or micro-aggression, my reaction is shock. I simply do not see these acts going on around me.

Because of my place of privilege as a white woman and a woman religious, I have not had to see and know many of the painful experiences of my sisters and brothers of color. I have been protected from knowing and been allowed to wear blinders to what is right in front of me.

Ever more deeply I see that I have no right to this privileged ignorance. My central task is to wake up

and become aware, to see what is right in front of me with new eyes, eyes that are awake and alert. And I find myself hearing an admonition of Mary Oliver in a quite new way: “Pay attention, Be astonished, Say something.”

My commitment then is to:

- Pay attention so I really see what is happening around me.
- Be astonished both by the beauty and goodness of the world as well as the many subtle ways in which we diminish or injure one another.
- Say something that moves me from being a silent observer to an active and engaged conversation partner.

### Susan Francois, CSJP

*Member, LCWR National Board*

We cannot get around the reality that, just now at least, the membership of LCWR is predominantly White sisters in leadership of predominantly White congregations. I am a White woman. While I carry the assorted baggage of a lifetime of racialized experiences, rarely, if ever, have I had to actively live my daily life with a race lens, because of white privilege. I am grateful that the LCWR “Spirit Call Within a Call” beckons me forward, in community, on this journey of unpacking racism and white supremacy.

I have experienced the LCWR Zoom gatherings with Dr. Kathy Obear as a shared journey of the heart. Rather than a typical workshop or diversity session, our time together is an opportunity to dig deeper into the messy work of transformation, both individually and collectively. One key insight that I have taken to heart is that of impact vs. intention. While going down the rabbit hole of analyzing my past actions is not particularly helpful, it is always a temptation. The frame of impact vs. intention calls me instead to learn from those experiences, rather than be ashamed, and to focus on the impact of my words and actions.

## LCWR Leadership Group Attends to the Life of the Conference

The 15 LCWR regional chairs joined the LCWR national board and office staff on February 16 for a virtual meeting. The meeting primarily focused on the group's work on dismantling racism led by Dr. Kathy Obear. For the remainder of the meeting, the group focused on other items key to the life of LCWR including:

- Plans for the spring LCWR regional meetings
- The 2021 LCWR assembly
- A report on the Discerning Our Emerging Future initiative

On the following day the board and staff met for further engagement with updates from committees and the executive and associate directors as well as with the finance and audit report. They also continued their discussion of the upcoming LCWR assembly and the emerging future initiative.

The board also met for an hour with the board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men where they shared conference updates, the impact of COVID-19 on women and men religious, and the new Vatican *Laudato Si'* campaign.

## CNS Publishes Article on Women Religious and COVID

Several LCWR members were quoted in a recent article published by Catholic News Service, "Elderly nuns hit by COVID-19: Some getting vaccines, others still waiting," by Carol Zimmerman. The article is available [here](#).

## Extra Copies of Occasional Papers Available

Copies are in the mail of the Winter 2021 issue of LCWR's journal, *Occasional Papers*, entitled **God's Infinite Vision**. Some extra copies are available [for purchase online](#).



by Mary Hughes, OP

The work of the Discernment Initiative Planning Group (DIPG) to synthesize the many conversations and consultations about discerning the emerging future of religious life has resulted in a document entitled "What We are Seeing." The document addresses the process for reorganizing religious life for mission, and the themes and focus areas that surfaced. It concludes with some possible next steps. This document will be disseminated to share its findings with suggested processes for reflection at LCWR region meetings, leadership team/council meetings, and among members of religious institutes. Gratitude is extended to Martha McGinnis, a graphic recorder, who converted many words into images and to all who contributed to these conversations.

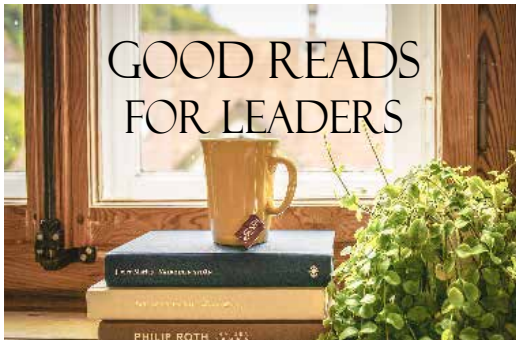
In a recent email message, members were offered a new service free of cost that links leadership to a seasoned "conversation partner." If teams wish to have a partner accompany them to discuss new ways to move into the future, to stretch their thinking, or consider a possibility that may have been overlooked, they might consider requesting this new virtual service. All conversation partners are former LCWR members who have completed an orientation. An application can be obtained by logging into [the members' side of the LCWR website](#) and looking under "Private Attachments." The form should be downloaded, completed, and mailed to [Mary Hughes, OP](#).

## Translated Article from Winter 2021 Occasional Papers

The following article from the Winter 2021 edition of *Occasional Papers* has been translated into Spanish and is available on the LCWR website [here](#):

- El Trabajo Interior De Transformación Necesario Para Estos Tiempos /Seeing with New Eyes: The Inner Work of Transformation Needed for These Times – Ted Dunn

Translation provided by the Dominican Sisters of Peace



## The Cross and the Lynching Tree

by James H. Cone

Recommended by Jan Cebula, OSF

Recent events have escalated the urgency of understanding racism: of delving more deeply into US history; our complicity as whites; the importance of centering the experience of African Americans; and the gospel call in these times.

*The Cross and the Lynching Tree* brings all these together. Cone illuminates how spirituals, the blues, art, and literary imagination give bodily expression to the violations of the body. Using Reinhold Niebuhr, Cone points out the blindness of white theologians, white Christians. He delves into how Martin Luther King, Jr. gave expression to the Gospel and how African American men and women found meaning in the cross in different ways.

As the title suggests, Cone's greatest contribution is his reflection on the paradox of both the cross and the lynching tree: "The lynching tree is a metaphor for white America's crucifixion of black people. It is the window that best reveals the religious meaning of the cross in our land." Whites justified their actions with their Christian faith while Blacks struggled to find liberation and meaning in that Christian faith, in the crucifixion. The lynching tree "keeps the cross from becoming a symbol of abstract, sentimental piety." By probing these paradoxes, Cone plunges the reader into the depths of the lived meaning of the crucifixion and reveals the liberating and empowering message of the Gospel.

One comes away with deep gratitude for the incredible contributions of African American women and men to the struggle for democracy and to understanding and living the core of the Gospel.

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**  
Orlando, Florida  
August 10 - 13, 2021

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

**LCWR New Leaders Workshop**  
Location to be determined  
March 31 - April 3, 2022

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

## Video Available of Celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life

In honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Day for Consecrated Life, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Religious Formation Conference, the Religious Brothers Conference, and the National Religious Vocation Conference held a virtual gathering on February 2 to discuss religious life through the lens of Pope Francis's new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. The event was facilitated by Chris Patiño, FSC and Celia Ashton, OCD. It featured talks on *Fratelli Tutti* by Joseph Bach, OSF, Leslie Keener, CDP, Steve Dos Santos, CPPS, and Nicole Trahan, FMI. A video of the event is available [here](#).



## Enfolded in Mystery Reflections on the Experience of Elected Leadership

In January approximately 80 LCWR members participated in one of three Zoom meetings to reflect on the experience of elected leadership through the lens of an ever-evolving universe. Prompted by words from Judy Cannato, David Whyte, and Nancy Schreck, OSF and framed by Bernadette Farrell's hymn, "Word of God," the groups engaged in 45 minutes of contemplative dialogue in small groups focused on these questions:

- What does it mean for me to be recreated for the Holy One's purpose in **this** place and in **this** time?
- What do I need to see differently and embrace about myself, about my congregation and religious life, and about our world?
- How does it make a difference for me to understand my ministry of elected leadership in the context of an ever-evolving universe?
- What is the gift and the particular growing edge that I need to bring to my ministry of elected leadership in 2021?
- What would it mean to begin to trust my flaws?

Upon returning to the large group, members were invited to share any insights or wisdom that emerged in the smaller groups. The gathering closed with participants sharing what they wanted to carry with them from the time together and listening once again to the hymn "Word of God."

## Join Days of Learning and Action to Shine a Light on Human Trafficking

Join National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, LCWR, US Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking, and others for a virtual human trafficking conference, *Shine the Light: Root Causes and Intersections*. The conference, which is free, will be held over two afternoons, March 8, 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM ET, and March 9, 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM ET. The March 9



event will feature a Call to Action on Trafficking and provide opportunities for advocacy.

Participants will hear from survivors; service providers and other experts and attendees will have the opportunity to engage in a Q&A with panelists both days. Participants will also have an opportunity to learn about simple, easy, and effective actions to combat trafficking. Day 1 will begin with an overview that speaks to the root causes of human trafficking. Panel presentations on both sex and labor trafficking with domestic and international components will follow. Day 2 will focus on advocacy campaigns and how each person can make a difference. Details and registration may be found at the [conference webpage](#).

## Faith and Civic Organizations Urge Support of the For the People Act

LCWR is one of a number of faith-based and civic organizations urging Congress to enact the *For the People Act* (HR 1/S 1), a sweeping anti-corruption package to clean up Washington, protect and expand voting rights, restore integrity to government, and put the needs and priorities of the American people ahead of moneyed special interests. This historic reform effort will clean up decades of dysfunction in Washington, return power to the American people, and put the country on a path toward a more democratic, equitable, just, and prosperous future.



Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD 3) the original sponsor of the House bill explained, "My colleagues and I have made HR 1 our first priority this year because our democracy is in a state of deep disrepair. We witnessed it during the 2020 election, where Americans across the country had to overcome rampant voter suppression, gerrymandering and a torrent of special interest dark money just to exercise their right to vote." Senate Majority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) (D-NY) has announced that the upper chamber will consider the *For the People Act* before any other bill, designating it S 1. Proponents of the legislation expect an uphill fight in the Senate.

More information is available about *For the People Act* and organizations like [Faithful Democracy](#) that are working for democratic reforms in government.



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

- Letter to President-Elect Biden urging him to undertake ambitious reforms to the interior immigration enforcement system via executive action, starting with a moratorium on deportations and new arrests and detention. LCWR (1/17/21)
- Amicus brief filed in the case of *Donald J. Trump v. Sierra club e.al.* before the Supreme Court of the United States arguing that the Trump administration's attempt to divert otherwise-allocated funds for construction of a border wall is unconstitutional. LCWR (1/19/21)
- Letter to President Biden and Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra asking them to direct the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to restore access to benefits under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients due to the COVID-19 pandemic. LCWR (1/26/21)
- Quote for Interfaith Immigration Coalition press release applauding President Biden's commitment to compassionate immigration reform that addresses the root causes of forced migration. Ann Scholz, SSND (1/21/21)
- Letter from Catholic leaders supporting the entry into force of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Carol Zinn, SSJ (1/22/21)
- Interfaith statement upon the entry into force of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons calling for strengthening the power of the treaty and encouraging signatories to work for peace, cooperation, and common security. LCWR (1/22/21)
- Letter to President Biden from national faith-based bodies and organizations requesting that he re-establish a robust White House faith-based office. LCWR (1/22/21)
- Interfaith statement thanking President Biden for rejoining the Paris Climate accord and reminding him it requires global leadership, transformative action in the United States, and support for our sisters and brothers worldwide. LCWR (1/22/21)
- Letter to President Biden requesting that Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its subsidiary agencies decline to execute individual removal orders pending completion of a comprehensive review of DHS's enforcement policies and priorities, consistent with the January 20 enforcement memo. LCWR (1/27/21)
- Letter to members of Congress urging them to include an amendment to the COVID relief bill which will provide a path to citizenship and protections for undocumented essential workers and their family members. Ann Scholz, SSND (1/27/21)
- Statement asking the Biden administration to address the structural origins driving forced migration. LCWR (1/28/21)
- Statement by faith-based organizations celebrating President Biden's recent collection of executive orders focused on the climate crisis. LCWR (1/28/20)
- Letter in support of H.R. 1/S. 1, the *For the People Act* which would help return power to American families and amplify the voices of communities that have historically been marginalized in our democracy. LCWR (1/29/21)
- Letter to members of Congress urging them to include an amendment to the next COVID relief bill to provide work authorization and a path to citizenship for essential immigrant workers and their spouses and children. Ann Scholz, SSND (2/2/21)
- Letter to President Biden urging him to end *Operation Streamline* and de-prioritize migration-related prosecutions. LCWR (2/3/21)
- Letter to members of Congress urging them to take quick action to enact President Biden's *American Rescue Plan*. LCWR (2/4/21)
- Letter to President Biden and DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas requesting that they designate and re-designate 18 countries for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), protecting more than 3 million people. LCWR (2/8/21)
- Statement of US Catholic bishops and the Tyler Clementi Foundation standing up for at-risk LGBT youth in the US. (2/15/21)

## Walk with Immigrant Communities This Lent

Once again, the Holy Days and Holidays Committee of the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) is offering prayer resources for use during the Lenten season.



This year's series, *Lenten Values: Springing into Action*, invites participants to reflect on nine values that ground the work of faith-based organizations for immigration justice. Each prayer will feature a brief reflection on scripture, an immigrant's story, a call to action and prayer. Materials are available [here](#).

## Ecumenical Advocacy Days Scheduled for April

Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) 2021, will be held April 18-21 when faith advocates will gather online to *Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored* and together reimagine a world that lives out the values of justice, equity, and the beloved community.



EAD 2021 is an opportunity to support the global movement for climate justice centered on and led by the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Participants will examine how the historic reality of colonialism and structural racism has designed systems that live on today through environmental racism and a myriad of other injustices that grew out of the same evil roots. Throughout 2020, these systemic issues manifested themselves in the disproportionate number of people of color who became sick with and died of COVID-19, as well as the continued extrajudicial killing of Black men and women.

Since 2003 people of faith who are passionate about peace and justice have gathered annually in Washington, DC to learn, network, and advocate.

Current events have always shaped its themes and agendas. Now current events are reshaping EAD itself. Organizers are excited about the new opportunities that open as they redesign the event for a virtual space, making it possible for more people to participate.

## President Biden Takes Steps Toward Creating Just Immigration Policy

On his first day in office, President Biden signed a number of immigration-related executive orders and



David Mark -- Pixabay

proposed a sweeping immigration bill (US Citizenship Act of 2021) to create a roadmap to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in America. The executive orders (EOs) end the Muslim Ban, reinstate DACA, pause deportations for 100 days to reset priorities, reverse Trump's plan to exclude undocumented immigrants from the census, extend relief for a small group of Liberians living in the United States with Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), take steps to start ending the horrific "Remain in Mexico" (MPP) program for asylum seekers, and stop all construction of the border wall.

On **February 2**, President Biden signed additional migration-related EOs. The first requires the creation of national strategies: to address the root causes of migrations, and to collaboratively manage migration in the region of Central America, and provide safe and orderly processing of asylum seekers. Two additional orders establish an interagency task force on the reunification of families and create a Task Force on New Americans to coordinate the federal government's efforts to welcome and support immigrants, including refugees, and facilitate local integration efforts.

On **February 4**, the President announced plans to propose an FY 2022 presidential determination (PD) of 125,000 and proposed an emergency revision of the FY 2021 PD from 15,000 to 62,500. The administration will consult with Congress about this proposed PD, as required by law, and then finalize their admission plans for FY 2021.





### NRVC 2021 Summer Institute

Building upon the success of the 2020 Summer Institute and the unpredictability of the global pandemic, all workshops for summer 2021 will be offered via Zoom. Registration for the **Summer Institute** is available at this [link](#).

- 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

### Catholic Sisters Week

To celebrate Catholic Sisters Week, March 8-14, the [Abundant Hope video series](#) is available on the NRVC YouTube Channel. These short two-minute videos can be used to demonstrate the vitality of consecrated life at board meetings, in ministry settings, community celebrations, school presentations, and on social media sites. They can also be used in community conversations with [NRVC's Study and Reflection Guide](#) to enhance vocation ministry. New videos will be added to include senior sisters, brothers, and priests in time for Catholic Sisters Week.

### JCWR Convocation Continues

Almost 200 justice seekers from across the country gathered on February 2 to hear Valarie Kaur, American activist, documentary filmmaker, lawyer, educator, faith leader, and founder of the [Revolutionary Love Project](#) explore justice in a world in transition. She challenged participants to continue to show up with love during these challenging and hopeful times of transition. Valerie's presentation may be viewed [here](#).

The 4<sup>th</sup> biennial convocation of the Justice Conference of Women Religious (JCWR), a network of justice

promoters for women's congregations, will continue through March. Each succeeding virtual gathering will feature a speaker addressing an aspect of the [2019-2022 LCWR assembly resolution](#) which challenges women religious to address the root causes of racism, forced migration, and the climate crisis by examining the intersection of the three crises. The sessions will include a brief keynote address followed by the opportunity for justice promoters to share ideas and explore future collaboration.

The focus of each session is: February 25 – racism, March 11 – forced migration, and March 25 – climate crisis. Each session is scheduled for 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM ET. There is no fee for these events. Additional information and registration are available [here](#). Questions may be directed to [Reg McKillip](#) or [Sarah Nash](#).

### Update from NRRO

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) maintains a [webinar archive](#) that features programming on a host of age-related topics. Offered in collaboration with the Avila Institute of Gerontology, the webinars are just 60 minutes and provide support and resources for leadership, healthcare personnel, caregivers, and seniors. Recent presentations have explored strategies for [navigating eldercare amid the coronavirus pandemic](#). Institutes are encouraged to visit the archive and share these webinars.



[Applications for Direct Care Assistance \(DCA\)](#) are due by Wednesday, March 31. DCA provides eligible religious institutes with funding to help meet ongoing retirement needs, but applications must be submitted annually. Institutes that need help completing the application may contact NRRO grants specialist [Monica Glover](#) or call 202-541-3216. All leaders are urged to complete the application whether or not their institute is eligible for or requests funding. The information helps the NRRO develop a more complete assessment of retirement needs and assets among US religious institutes.

Retirement Fund  
for Religious

Please give to  
those who have  
given a lifetime.



## Surprised by God: A Lenten Invitation to Reflect on God's Surprising Nearness

The Religious Formation Conference (RFC) extends an invitation to a Lenten webinar with Dr. Chrissy Zaker on **Wednesday, March 3 from 1:00 - 2:00 PM CT; 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET.**

During winter's darkness and this time of Lenten renewal, it may be difficult to recognize God in everyday life. Refining theological reflection skills is one critical way to attune hearts to God's presence. In 2014, Pope Francis said, "Our God is a God of surprises..." In this context, Christina Zaker will guide participants to reflect on God's movement in their lives. Drawing from the wisdom of the parables, she will encourage participants to recognize God's surprising nearness, explore what that nearness means and what it demands as Christians. Time together will include conversation, reflection, and shared wisdom that encourages all to ask, as Pope Francis suggests, "Am I open to a God of Surprises?"

Conference webinars are free and open to all. Registration is required and may be found [here](#).



Please remember LCWR's generous donors and their intentions in your prayer.



## Religious Formation Conference Program Director Search

The Religious Formation Conference (RFC) is searching for its next program director who will work with staff and leadership to advance the mission of the conference.

Specific responsibilities are outlined in the job description [available here](#). Further inquiries about the position may be sent to [rfc@relforcon.org](mailto:rfc@relforcon.org). The search will remain open until the position is filled, but preference will be given to applicants whose materials reach the conference by **March 9, 2021**.

The Religious Formation Conference educates and strengthens formators in their ministry of formation. The RFC engages religious communities with timely resources, services, and experiences that support initial and ongoing formation, that are responsive to an emerging future, in prophetic witness to Gospel values through personal and communal transformation. More information is available at [www.relforcon.org](http://www.relforcon.org).



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by Joan Mumaw, IHM  
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South Sudan is experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 and has mandated during February the closure of all schools, churches, and other places where people gather. The first “lockdown” was in place from March to October 2020 and the schools have never really re-opened except for those classes where students in terminal years needed to take exit exams. This includes students in grade 8 and 11 and those who will graduate in post-secondary programs or colleges.

The Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) re-opened in October 2020. The principal, Esperance Bamiriyo, CMS, is negotiating with the government to remain open on the premise that healthcare training is an essential service.

The Solidarity Teacher Training College (STTC) had just opened for one day when the government ordered the closing of all schools due to the pandemic. Students had been flown in from Juba at great expense. The principal, Margaret Scott, RNDM, is negotiating with the ministry to have those in Level 3 remain on campus to take national exams at a date to be determined by the government given the loss of several months of education in 2020.

The over-all incidence of COVID-19 is low; 4600 cases with 66 deaths. Only six people are in ICU. However, on February 3, 94 people tested positive for the virus, prompting the call for a second lockdown for one month. Some local travel is permitted as is flying between states. Those entering from outside South Sudan must quarantine upon entering the country. Some people have learned from their experience with infectious diseases, such as Ebola, cholera, measles, etc., how to protect their communities when they have no access to healthcare. Sixty-six percent of the population is under age 24; they seem to be less symptomatic or recover more easily. Still 10% die before age five-even prior to COVID-19.

Those who suffer most are those who cannot work, much like what is happening in the United States. For the local staff of the STTC, CHTI and Good Shepherd Peace Center, Solidarity remains the “payroll protection plan” as there are no social programs or unemployment benefits. Our desire is to keep these loyal staff members from falling into the category of food insecurity or famine. More than 50% of the country is receiving or needs to receive humanitarian assistance due to ethnic fighting over land and cattle, flooding of the Nile and its tributaries, and now COVID-19.

We are grateful for your continued support enabling us to support the work of Solidarity with South Sudan. Please remember to pray for the people of this war-ravaged nation.

## News from the UN

### March 8—International Women’s Day

recognizes women for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political. The theme for 2021, *Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World*, celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also aligned with the theme of the 65th session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) and the flagship [Generation Equality campaign](#), which calls for women’s right to decision-making in all areas of life, equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to all forms of violence against women and girls, and healthcare services that respond to their needs.



### March 21—International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa against the apartheid “pass laws.” Proclaiming the day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. The rights to equality and non-discrimination are cornerstones of human rights law and are enshrined in Articles 1 and 2 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.