LCWR Begins Significant Initiative to Discern God's Invitation to Religious Life

As the members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious enter fully into the discernment of how to organize religious life so it has a viable and sustainable future, LCWR will offer monthly updates on this important process.

The Work Thus Far

LCWR has asked all leaders to engage in two next steps in Discerning Our Emerging Future, the LCWR initiative on organizing religious life.

The Current Tasks for LCWR Members

In October, all LCWR members received an email asking them to involve the members of their own institutes in this important discernment process for the future of US religious life. Available to the leaders are: the one-hour recording of the conversation among the LCWR presidents and executive director that occurred at the LCWR assembly, a process to use with their own members, as well as a link to an online survey for some simple feedback after engaging membership.

In addition, all LCWR members are asked to engage in at least one listening session which will be held via Zoom during November and December. These sessions are designed for the planning group to hear directly from leaders their questions and concerns, as well as (continued on page 3)

Discernment is a slow process without a predetermined ending that requires us to bring what we are thinking, feeling, and hearing to prayer. It asks us to keep our hearts open.

Further study what it reveals about where LCWR members are nationally with this effort.

The Content Analysis of Feedback

A content analysis of feedback from the assembly small groups from which several major themes emerged that are guiding the group’s planning.

A Study of the Feedback

A study of the feedback from all leadership teams after they engaged in discussions on the CARA data.

Preparation of a Process

Preparation of a process to discuss the CARA data at regional meetings. Feedback from these meetings is currently being received by the group who will further study what it reveals about where LCWR members are nationally with this effort.

by Mary Hughes, OP

LCWR Begins Significant Initiative to Discern God's Invitation to Religious Life

November 2020
As I pondered what to write for this column, three converging experiences were happening within me. First, I had just mailed my ballot for the national elections and utilized BallotTrax to confirm that my ballot landed in the Orange County Registrar of Voters (do you hear the echo of LCWR’s emerging orientation of being “technologically astute”?). Second, the day before mailing my ballot I had just re-read the book, *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo. Third, the day of this writing, I had finished reading *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis’ latest encyclical. Does all this sound familiar to you as you navigate these dark, churning waters we find ourselves in at this moment in time?

My ponderings surfaced the image of the polyhedron referred to in *Fratelli Tutti* by Pope Francis. Occurrences in the world, our nation, and religious life itself evoke so many thoughts and experiences and each has varying degrees of impact on all facets of life. As Pope Francis noted, this image, with all its various sides, represents a society where differences coexist -- complementing, enriching, and illuminating one another.

At first glance, the image of the polyhedron can inaccurately portray an ordered and rational world or state of being. This is not how I am experiencing this moment in time. What this image does is remind me that I need to pray, reflect, discern, and engage with others about all that is unfolding in religious life and in the larger world.

As I finished reading *Fratelli Tutti* it was easy to identify points of connection to LCWR’s emerging orientations. First, global consciousness is a thread throughout this encyclical, as is the second orientation, “porous borders.” As Pope Francis noted in the first paragraph of this encyclical in quoting St. Francis, “love transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother... St. Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person.”

The third orientation, integrated partnerships for life and mission, is just as foundational to the plea in *Fratelli Tutti* because “fraternitas” has to do with the kinds of relationships we have with one another (and all creatures). Pope Francis writes of a universal aspiration to fraternity between all men and women.

LCWR’s fourth orientation, being present in the public square, is an invitation found throughout *Fratelli Tutti*. The disorders of our current realities call for a response from us as women religious, and from all men and women of good will. The echoes of the Pax Christi process of pray, study, and act resounded within as I allow the depth and breadth of this encyclical to enlighten and challenge me.

As the pandemic rages on and impacts all aspects of our lives, I pray that we do not allow the real limitations and restrictions of this pandemic to dull or mute our response to *Fratelli Tutti*, racism, climate change, immigration, and forced migration. The pains, struggles, and groanings of the world and Earth reverberate throughout the cosmos. Let us not be spectators; rather, let us continue to live and embody the theme of our August LCWR assembly, "God’s Infinite Vision: Our Journey to the Borders and Beyond.”
their thoughts on possible collaborative efforts they may wish to pursue. A schedule of these gatherings will be forthcoming. These sessions will be facilitated by members of the planning group who will hold sessions as well with facilitators and some of the consulting firms working with religious congregations.

Future Next Steps

In early 2021, additional listening conversations will be held for younger members, for racially and culturally diverse populations of religious, for consultants, vicars, theologians, and others. The planning group anticipates that these ongoing cycles of listening, receiving feedback, prayer, and discerning the quiet and persistent invitation of God will be an important part of this process.

Along the way, some religious institutes may decide that they are ready to try a new way of organizing across institutes. LCWR can offer some fiscal support for those efforts.

Discernment is a slow process without a predetermined ending that requires us to bring what we are thinking, feeling, and hearing to prayer. It asks us to keep our hearts open. A resource you may find helpful is the recently published book, Discernment: Theology and Practice, Communal and Personal, written by Ladislas Orsy, SJ and published by Liturgical Press.

We will provide updates on the discernment process in the LCWR newsletter. Any questions or suggestions also may be sent at any time to any member of the Discernment Initiative Planning Group.

Order Winter 2021 Occasional Papers

The Winter 2021 issue of LCWR’s journal, Occasional Papers, entitled God’s Infinite Vision, explores how religious might look upon this time of upheaval in almost every aspect of society as a moment for transformation. In this edition, the authors continue the conversation that took place at the 2020 LCWR assembly on expanding one’s own vision so that it aligns more closely with that of God. Questions will be plumbed such as these: How might we view life from perspectives that penetrate beyond and below surfaces, horizons, and limitations? What do we need to see with greater clarity that will help us be instruments of the change that the world needs for its very survival?

Highlights of this issue are an interview with theologian Douglas Christie, author of The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology, as well as an interview with theologian Barbara Holmes, author of Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church. In addition, the issue features an array of interesting articles that probe how religious might courageously enter into the invitation the chaos and uncertainty of these times offer. Orders must be made by December 15.

Subscriptions for Occasional Papers are also available and make great Christmas gifts for only $15 per year.

Questions about orders may be directed to Bianca Louis.
LCWR Looking for Recommendations on Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Leadership Resources

Some members may recall that in the early 1990s LCWR produced a popular resource manual for its members entitled, Leading from Within. In recent years, as a small working group reviewed this resource, it became clear that an update or revision is needed. Further reflection led to the decision to create an online resource sharing forum to include links to reflection questions, articles, TED talks/lectures, online presentations and workshops, specific LCWR resources, and book and poetry recommendations. The focus this resource sharing forum is on the various aspects of transformational leadership.

The working group is specifically looking for recommendations of current transformational leadership resources that reflect broad cultural and ethnic diversity. LCWR members are invited to send recommendations of authors of books and poetry, articles, or online presentations that might be helpful to include in this new resource to Marie McCarthy, SP by November 30.

2021 LCWR Annual Membership Renewal Reminder

All LCWR members are encouraged to promptly renew their 2021 membership. Since renewal opened October 2, 2020, many congregational leaders have responded.

Any congregation that needs financial assistance for membership is asked to contact Christine Beckett, SCN as soon as possible. Because of the generous gifts of LCWR members, the conference has a membership assistance fund that can be used for such requests. The conference encourages any congregation needing assistance for the 2021 membership to take advantage of this opportunity.

Graced Crossroads: Pathways to Deep Change and Transformation

by Ted Dunn

Recommended by Mary Jo Nelson, OLVM

Dr. Ted Dunn’s new book is a rich resource for leaders of religious life, as well as for facilitators and consultants. Although many sections of the book are not entirely new, what is new is the way he integrates spirituality, psychology, and organizational development theory into a challenging framework that can lead leaders into deep thinking about their congregations. The book is a reflection on Dr. Dunn’s experience of the reality of religious life especially in the United States and a guide for how leaders can facilitate an integrated path toward communal transformation.

This book is timely for the transformation of religious life regardless of where an institute is in its journey - moving toward completion of its life and mission or rebirthing a new way to live its life and mission. Dr. Dunn identifies several values and practices that need to be rooted in our lives to facilitate the communal transformation. These include deepening the quality of communal relationships, living intentionally in the paschal mystery, embracing deep change (changing the how and why and not just the what of our lives), seeking collaboration and partnerships, becoming a learning community, and being imaginative and creative with our response to the reality of our world and church.

This communal transformation involves the weaving of personal, inter-personal, and organizational work. It is more cyclical than linear work. Although this book is a challenge to read, and even more challenging to engage, I recommend the deep dive!
The dates below are tentative due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will be kept up to date on plans as they progress.

At this time, all LCWR activities will take place virtually through the end of May 2021.

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 Assembly**
*St. Louis, Missouri*
August 9 — 12, 2022

Faith Leaders Call on Senators to Lead Global COVID-19 Response

On September 17, 2020, 17 faith-based national organizations, representing thousands of members serving poor and vulnerable people around the world, delivered a letter to senators urging them to pass legislation that includes international assistance to address the social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

“The growing, grave threat to life and livelihood the coronavirus poses to people in countries less well-off than the US, and recognizing that our nation’s economy and efforts to contain the coronavirus are interconnected with those in other countries,” the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim organizations wrote, “we ask that you co-sponsor S.4139, the Support for Global Financial Institution Pandemic Response Act, and ensure its provisions (Special Drawing Rights) move forward alongside a funding package that includes $20 billion for foreign assistance.”

Ann Scholz, SSND, associate director for social mission for LCWR, added, “Our faith and our shared humanity compel us to walk in solidarity with all those affected by the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic devastation it leaves in its wake. In the past the United States has provided crucial leadership and critical relief to those facing natural disasters, health emergencies or economic crises.

“We call on the Senate to ensure that our nation will once again lead the world in its efforts to meet the health and nutrition needs of those facing economic destruction as a result of the pandemic,” she continued. “As Pope Francis reminded us in his remarks during his September 2, 2020 General Audience, ‘Solidarity is the road to take towards a post-pandemic world, towards the healing of our interpersonal and social sicknesses. There is no other path.’”
Faith Community Outraged by Administration’s Devastation of the US Refugee Program

The Trump administration is proposing another historic low refugee admissions goal of just 15,000 for FY 2021, according to its report to Congress.

While the administration honored the September 30 deadline for reporting the Presidential Determination (PD) number, it violated US law by failing to consult with Congress prior to setting the refugee admissions goal. As a result, the refugee resettlement program has ground to a halt, leaving thousands of refugees in harm’s way.

Faith leaders are understandably outraged by the administration’s disregard for the safety of those fleeing violence and its disregard for the requirements of US law and are urging Congress to hold the administration accountable by requiring good faith consultations, increasing the proposed refugee admissions goal to 95,000, the historic average in previous administrations, and ensuring that the 2021 PD is signed as soon as possible.

“The Trump administration’s continued dismantling of the US refugee resettlement program, in the face of an unprecedented global pandemic and continuing refugee crisis, is unconscionable. More than 26 million refugees, mostly children, have been forced from their homes. Fleeing persecution, they are quite literally running for their lives,” added Carol Zinn, SSJ LCWR executive director. “The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees, and women religious have been blessed to be able to accompany refugee communities. We strongly object to President Trump’s attempts to limit our ability to heed the scriptural command to welcome the stranger and care for the foreigner. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious urges our government to act with compassion for those most in need and to rebuild the US refugee program.”

Catholics Call on Attorney General Barr to Protect Children from Online Trafficking

US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) submitted a petition with more than 1200 signatures from supporters calling on Attorney General Barr to do his job and enforce the Protect Our Children Act of 2008.

The act focuses on preventing online child exploitation and prosecuting those responsible for this crime. This legislation calls for a strategic and coordinated campaign across jurisdictions to identify offenders and protect children from stalking and other forms of harmful abuse. The law requires the attorney general to review, update, and implement strategies every two years. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

USCSAHT executive director, Jennifer Reyes Lay, said, “We all have a role to play in ending modern-day slavery through prevention, protection, prosecution, and rehabilitation. We take our role seriously in informing the public about this crime, advocating for stronger protections, and providing direct support to survivors. The Department of Justice and Attorney General Barr are currently failing in their role to fully enforce and recommend funding for laws that help protect vulnerable populations and prosecute those responsible for trafficking, and we must hold them accountable. Their inattention to this crisis has left our children at higher risk for becoming victims of this horrible crime.”

As children have returned to school, many through virtual learning, their increased time online puts them at greater risk of exploitation. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported a 400% increase in reports of online child abuse and exploitation from April 2019 - April 2020. The petition simply asks the attorney general to fulfill his responsibilities under the Protect our Children Act of 2008.
Food Giants Nestlé and Cargill Claim Immunity in Child Labor Cases

Last month, agriculture giants Nestlé and Cargill submitted briefs to the US Supreme Court in the cases Nestlé USA Inc. v. John Doe 1 and Cargill Inc. v. John Doe 1 arguing that they have immunity from responsibility and prosecution for human rights abuses alleged by former child slave laborers on cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast, West Africa.

Marco Simons, general counsel of the human rights and climate justice organization EarthRights International, suggests that the defendants “[A]re trying to avoid legal responsibility for slave labor, claiming that because they are corporations, they simply cannot be held responsible. Even though slavery has been banned by international law since the 19th Century, they argue that only human beings—not corporations—can be sued for slavery. So, even if they profit from child slavery, the children who escape this bondage cannot hold them accountable.”

In 2005, with the help of International Rights Advocates (IRA), the plaintiffs, who have remained anonymous for safety reasons, sued Nestlé USA and Cargill in US courts. The former child slaves of Malian origin who were trafficked and forced to work cultivating cocoa beans on farms in Côte d’Ivoire filed a complaint on behalf of themselves and others against the defendants for the forced labor and torture they suffered as a result of the wrongful conduct. The plaintiffs asserted their claims of child slavery, forced labor, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and torture under the Alien Tort Claims Act which permits foreign nationals to bring civil action in US federal court for a violation of international law or a US treaty.

Though both companies have since updated their human rights policies and strengthened oversight of their supply chains, they have never compensated the victims. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in October 2018 that Nestlé and Cargill could not avoid the lawsuits. In July 2020, the defendants appealed the ruling and the US Supreme Court agreed to hear the cases at the request of the two companies, the Trump administration, the US Chamber of Commerce, among others. The Court is expected to hold oral arguments as early as December of this year.

Court Decision Could Unleash Next Major Family Separation Crisis

The 9th Circuit decision in Ramos v. Wolf brings the administration one step closer to ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and stripping away legal protections from more than 300,000 TPS holders currently living in the US. TPS holders from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Sudan are now subject to deportation starting as early as next year and the ruling opens the door for TPS holders from Honduras and Nepal to suffer the same fate.

In addition to dramatically upending hundreds of thousands of peoples’ lives, the decision could potentially unleash the next major family separation crisis unless Congress takes immediate action. More than 270,000 US citizens have parents with TPS.

Anna Gallagher, Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) executive director, said, “Congress created TPS more than thirty years ago, rightly, because it would be unconscionable to deport people back to crisis and conflict. No family should be faced with the choice of either splitting up or moving their entire family, including US citizen children, to a country where they face danger.”

CLINIC, and other immigrant allies including LCWR, advocated for the extension of TPS for all 10 countries that were enrolled in the program when President Trump took office. Despite overwhelming evidence that people could not safely return, the administration moved to end TPS for El Salvador, Honduras, Sudan, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Nepal.

Only Congress, not the courts, has the power to provide permanent protection. Advocates will continue to stand with TPS holders and their families who are leading the call for the Senate to take up HR 6, the American Dream and Promise Act, which provides Dreamers and TPS holders with a path to citizenship.
Plan to Host a 40th Anniversary Commemoration of the Roses in December

LCWR and the SHARE Foundation invite women religious to celebrate the gift of Dorothy Kazel, OSU; Maura Clarke, MM; Ita Ford, MM; and Jean Donovan who were brutally murdered by the US-supported Salvadoran military on December 2, 1980. Women religious are asked to host a prayer vigil, an evening of conversation and story-telling, a retreat, or other gathering in their communities, parishes or educational institutions to honor the memory of these four women and all who followed in their footsteps.

Organizers hope to commemorate the lives of the martyrs by hosting 40 remembrances in 40 cities to mark the 40th anniversary. A Roses in December Toolkit to help with local organizing is now available on the SHARE El Salvador website. The toolkit includes: the story of the four church women; background on El Salvador; ideas for the celebration; a prayer service; suggestions for action and advocacy; media suggestions; and a list of resources.

The SHARE Foundation is collecting brief descriptions of local events. In order to be counted among the 40, details about remembrances should be sent to Jose Artiga.
Updates from NRRO

The National Religious Retirement Office’s (NRRO) annual collection for religious will be held December 12-13 in most US parishes. Hundreds of religious institutes struggle to provide for senior members. Collection proceeds offer these communities vital assistance for retirement needs. All institutes are asked to support the appeal, whether or not the institute receives funding. Ongoing COVID-19 concerns may mean that many parishioners are unable to attend mass in person. This year assistance in raising awareness of the need is more important than ever. Campaign resources are available at the NRRO website, including a social media toolkit that makes it easy to promote the collection on social media platforms.

NRRO’s upcoming webinar, The COVID-19 Crisis: The Lessons We Are Learning, will feature congregational leaders and healthcare coordinators sharing experiences, insights, and new approaches in responding to eldercare challenges caused by COVID-19. Materials are available to learn more and register online.

NRVC Virtual Convocation

NRVC will host a virtual convocation October 28-31, 2020 with the theme: 2020 Vision: Focus on Hope. The NRVC biennial convocation is known for its keynote presentations, communal prayer, and networking opportunities with all those who support vocations. Participants will:

- Attend keynote presentations by Linh Hoang, OFM; Dave Kelly, CPPS; and Addie Lorraine Walker, SSND
- Pray together bilingually led by composer Jaime Cortez, entitled La esperanza nos rodea / Hope is all around us
- Share experiences and ask questions in three breakout groups
- Listen to newer entrant insights from those who entered consecrated life after 2002

Three workshops will also be offered to enhance professional skills on the following topics:

- Candidate Issues in Immigration Law presented by Miguel Naranjo
- Communicating Key Messages of Hope presented by Maxine Kollasch, IHM
- The Impact of the Consumption of Gaming and Pornography presented by David Songy, OFM Cap

More information and registration are available on the NRVC website.

Please remember LCWR’s generous donors and their intentions in your prayer.
The Religious Formation Conference (RFC) is holding a webinar with Ted Dunn, PhD on **Tuesday, December 1 at 1:00 PM (ET)**. RFC webinars are free and open to all. Registration is required.

The goal of the webinar will be to explore what it means to facilitate the emergence of a new religious life.

- Graced Crossroads: pathways to deep change and transformation
- Learning to cooperate with grace
- Inner work of transformation

This webinar will explore what it means to facilitate the emergence of a new religious life by cooperating with grace and engaging in the inner work of transformation.

The webinar’s presenter, Ted Dunn, is a licensed clinical psychologist and co-founder of Comprehensive Consulting Services in St. Louis, Missouri.

Members may find information and registration at RFC’s website.

### News from the UN

November 20—**Universal Children’s Day** was established to promote awareness of children and children’s welfare worldwide. It was November 20, 1959 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It is also the date in 1989 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

November 25—**International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women** reminds the people of the world that violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, public health pandemic, and serious obstacle to sustainable development. Violence against women and girls imposes large-scale costs on families, communities, and economies. The world cannot afford it. Women and girls cannot abide it and they should not have to.

Solidarity with South Sudan is a compassionate presence to the people of a war-weary land which is now beset by massive flooding of the Nile and its tributaries. Excessive rainfall has exacerbated the situation. Add to this, ongoing ethnic fighting, a plague of locusts, economic collapse and COVID-19 -- a recipe for a failed state. The incidence and deaths due to COVID-19 are low; however, there is little testing and even less ability to care for those infected with the virus. Generally, the incidence of infection on the continent is low and the reasons are being studied. More information may be found [here](#) about this issue.

The institutions managed and staffed by Solidarity remain closed, except for the Good Shepherd Peace Center which, since May, has hosted small groups of sisters for retreat and training by the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC). Additional funding has been secured for the training of catechists and diocesan pastoral teams. The Solidarity staff, besides doing planning and presentations, are also tasked with ensuring compliance with measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Solidarity with South Sudan annually holds an assembly of the members and those interested in the work of the organization. Due to the pandemic, the assembly will be held online this year. This allows for greater participation from congregations not present in Rome. Those who support the work of Solidarity may register and attend this assembly which will provide an update on the ministry.

**Date:** Thursday December 3, 2020
**Time:** 8:30 AM - 2:00 PM (ET)

If you are interested in participating in this event, please register and complete this [form](#) and send it [here](#). All documents and the link for the meeting will be sent directly to the participants’ email.

For further information contact Joan Mumaw.