

Update

LCWR
The Newsletter of the
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

November 2024



Join with Others in the LCWR Virtual Prayer Space During the US National Elections

LCWR members and their membership are invited to participate in the LCWR Virtual Prayer Space during the US national election. The space provides an opportunity to pray for elections that are just and free of violence. To participate in the vigil, the link is [here](#); no prior registration required.

November 4 - 6

Opens: November 4, 12:00 AM ET

Closes: November 6, 11:00 PM ET

Institutes and congregations are encouraged to indicate a commitment to particular house on the [LCWR Prayer Vigil Commitment Calendar](#) so that LCWR can assure that all the hours are covered for the prayer vigil..

From the LCWR Presidency
Wisdom for Troubled Times

Maureen Geary, OP — LCWR Past President

As we awaken each day to news of warfare and violence around our globe and to turmoil in the United States relating to climate disasters and our impending elections, we may find ourselves filled with unease and searching for the way forward. We are reminded by the late Bishop Ken Untener that “it helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.” It helps to live from a stance of transforming grace.



of life no matter what is served. Isn't that transforming grace?

Loving refuses grudges and doesn't ask for a return. One who loves has a very big God, indeed. Isn't that transforming grace?

Sharing is done by one who is convinced there is enough for all. There is no need to hoard or hold out. One who shares knows a provident God. Isn't that transforming grace?

Recently I helped prepare a memorial service for my cousin Karen, who died of Alzheimer's disease at the age of 80. In pondering Karen's life and the impact she had, I was drawn to a contemporary reading of Proverbs 31 from the CSJ Ministry of the Arts website. [1] The book of Proverbs dates back nearly 3,000 years -- so it offers the long view. Karen personified the key words of this translation: valiant, joyful, strong, patient, loving and sharing. In these challenging times, we need women -- and all people -- to live these qualities.

Valiant connotes determination and courage. One who is valiant knows her heart and stands her ground, and recognizes that others have strongly held convictions, too. Isn't that transforming grace?

Joyful goes beyond happy. It is a way of being that centers one and allows one to love in spite of loss. Isn't that transforming grace?

Strong can refer to both physical and emotional resourcefulness. One who is strong doesn't need to dominate; she has what she needs to deal with life as it comes. Isn't that transforming grace?

Patient means steadfast, staying the course despite great challenge. One who is patient can stay at the table

I am drawn to a beautiful comment from the 2024 LCWR assembly evaluations by one of our members. (I cannot give credit for this beautiful reflection because evaluations are submitted anonymously)

“I believe we are called to more than legacy, completion and/or fulfillment. We are called to deep transformation -- personally and communally (separate from our sense of separateness) to bring about God's kingdom. Anne Hillman says in her book, *Awakening the Energies of Love - Discovering Fire for the Second Time* (p. 57), ‘If we hope to bless our children's and grandchildren's future lives, we need to do the hard work of challenging our own thinking -- and hold one another gently and with mercy as we each untangle the limiting beliefs that hold us and our culture captive.’ Exploring ways for leadership to engage in this work in a very intentional way with our members, associates, etc. feels like a topic that would complement the work of this assembly.”

Our journey of transforming grace is the way forward.

Endnote

1. Translation online at <https://spsmw.org/2012/05/11/a-valiant-woman/>

It helps to live from a stance of transforming grace.



Resource for Communal Discernment

Ongoing discernment of capacity for leadership is essential in this time of rapid change. To assist leaders with the processes of change and transition, Mary Jo Nelson, OLVN is developing a communal discernment resource based on her leadership experience in her own congregation and learnings gleaned from her service as a facilitator. The guide is available on the [LCWR website with other Discerning the Emerging Future resources](#).

Entitled “LCWR Discernment Guide for Selecting Future Leadership,” the user-friendly resource will eventually have four segments:

Part 1: Beginning the conversation on leadership

-- How do you know when you can no longer elect a leadership team?

Part 2: Making a choice -- The congregation is called to discern two crucial elements moving forward: What choices do you have when you need an appointed leader? What choice will your congregation make and why?

Part 3: Tending the future relationships -- How do you identify persons who can accompany you and provide leadership when you can no longer elect your own leadership?

Part 4: Transitioning to an appointed leader -- How will you orient, on-board, and transition leadership to an appointed leader?

Mary Jo will explain the discernment guide for selecting future leadership and answer questions during a Zoom conversation on **October 31, 1:00-2:30 PM ET**. Participants in the Zoom session are asked to access a copy of the guide prior to the online conversation. Registration for LCWR members is available on the Members section of the LCWR website under [Calendar](#).

Conversations for Leaders of International Congregations

The first of a series of online conversations for leaders of international congregations will take place November 7, 1:00-2:30 PM ET. This session, **International and Intercultural Leadership**, will feature Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ and Pat McDermott, RSM who will offer insights as a springboard for breakout and large group leader-to-leader conversations.

Mary Ann, the American province leader of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, will share stories of her international community’s response to the Society’s recent chapter call to reorganize for mission today and tomorrow in a rapidly changing world as they live their demographic shift from global north to south.

Pat, former president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, will reflect on how she has been deeply gifted through her engagements with other Mercy leaders throughout the world. Pat will speak to what she has learned from a vibrantly diverse experience of “seeing the whole” from various perspectives, while always honoring relationships. Registration for LCWR members is available on the Members section of the LCWR website under [Calendar](#).

Conversation Partners

As part of the Discerning Our Emerging Future initiative, LCWR offers leadership teams the opportunity to work with a conversation partner. Conversation partners are experienced former leaders who are willing to accompany teams as they plan for the future. There is no cost for this service.

This fall eight additional experienced leaders have joined the existing group of conversation partners. An application form for a conversation partner is available on the website in the members section under [Discerning the Emerging Future](#). The form may be sent to amunley@lcwr.org.



LCWR Launches New Initiative for All Women Religious: *Living into Our Emerging Future*

Living into Our Emerging Future is an initiative launched by LCWR in response to the requests from leaders for solid content and processes on living religious life in this time of dramatic change that could be used with the members of their institutes. This new initiative, which will run through February 2026, provides materials on religious life as it is being lived in this transitional time as well as processes for individual reflection and conversation. It also provides opportunities for the members of congregations to participate in Zoom sessions with women religious in other institutes so that sisters can connect across institutes for conversations together on substantive topics.

Leaders are encouraged to promote this opportunity in their own institutes. The initiative consists of six modules offered over 18 months.

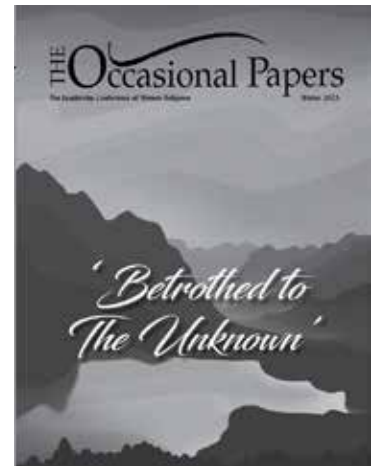
For each module, LCWR will host three Zoom sessions for any woman religious who would like to participate in conversations about the module. Registration links for the first two modules can be found in the calendar on page 6.

Orders Accepted for Winter 2025 Edition of LCWR's Occasional Papers

The Winter 2025 issue of LCWR's Occasional

Papers focuses on the theme, "**Betrothed to the Unknown.**"

This phrase, which comes from John O'Donohue's poem, "Inside the History of a Day," is an apt descriptor for the commitment to religious life in these times. To live this life fully today requires an ability to be at peace with not-knowing and to experience its mystery without fear, welcoming it as an adventure filled with much to teach.



In this edition, authors explore what helps one to live with the unknown. How might a person be sustained over the long haul? How does one find meaning and purpose – when so much seems to be changing with rapidity in the world and in the lives of religious communities? How might leaders best encourage and inspire their members to welcome the mystery of these times and be open to its potential?

Writers explore a number of topics including: how to find meaning when living with the unknown, practices and rituals for staying grounded in uncertain times, and the need for one another as all live through change. Also included are interviews with author and public theologian **Brian D. McLaren** and sociologist **Allison Pugh** who provide insights about how to thrive in these times and continue to contribute to the larger world by facing honestly the seismic shifts that appear to be ahead.

An issue of *Occasional Papers* costs \$5.00, plus postage. **Orders** must be placed by December 10, 2024. **Subscriptions** are also available and make great gifts for others at only \$15/year. Questions about orders or subscriptions may be directed to Faye Homed at fhomed@lcvr.org or by calling 301-588-4955.



LCWR Attends CMSWR Annual Assembly

by Maureen Geary, OP – LCWR Past President

LCWR president Kathy Brazda, CSJ; executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ; and I were warmly welcomed to the annual assembly of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) in St. Louis, Missouri, September 19-22, 2024.

The LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

For LCWR members and LCWR associates who are serving in congregation leadership



January 19 – 24, 2025
Desert Renewal Center
Tuscon, Arizona

Join with other women religious leaders for a five-day retreat that will provide opportunities to reflect on the blessings and challenges of religious life leadership today.

Lead by Cathy Bertrand, SSND and Rebecca Ann Gemma, OP, the days will include input, quiet contemplative space, a variety of ritual experiences and some optional opportunities for group sharing and individual conversation with one of the facilitators.

Additional information and a registration form are available on the LCWR website.

Only a few spaces are left so members are encouraged to sign-up soon if interested.

The assembly theme, “With Hearts Aflame: Women Religious as Eucharistic Missionaries,” was first broken open in the presidential address by CMSWR president Mother Anna Grace Neenan, OP and further developed by speakers Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart Yaqob, DMN and Dr. Lawrence Feingold. Other presenters included Sister Josephine Garrett, CSFN who spoke on common life as a foundation of the call to be Eucharistic Missionaries and Sister Mary Peter Muehlenkamp, OP, on religious immigration workers and permanent residence status.

As always, we were greeted with warm hospitality at meals and an opening reception, and we shared daily prayer in the celebration of Eucharist and in Holy Hours. Attendance this year was broadened to include council members, and the participation of all was enthusiastic and engaging. It was a joy to meet so many members of CMSWR and their councils. Table conversations after keynote presentations and at meals and socials allowed us to celebrate together our call to consecrated life and our service and commitment to the church and the world.



Maureen Geary, OP; Sister Mary Bendyna, OP (CMSWR executive director); Kathy Brazda, CSJ; Mother Anna Grace Neenan, OP (CMSWR president); Carol Zinn, SSJ



Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Discernment Guide for Selecting Future Leadership

October 31, 2024 - 1:00 PM ET

Registration [link](#) for LCWR members.

National Election Prayer Vigil

Opens: November 4, 12:00 AM ET

Closes: November 5, 11:59 PM ET

Sign up members: [Calendar](#) | [LCWR](#)

Living into Our Emerging Future – Module One – Session 1

November 7, 2024 – 7:00 – 8:15 PM

Registration [link](#).

Living into Our Emerging Future – Module One – Session 2

November 12, 2024 – 7:00 – 8:15 PM

Registration [link](#).

Living into Our Emerging Future – Module One – Session 3

November 13, 2024 – 3:30 – 4:45 PM

Registration [link](#).

Living into Our Emerging Future – Module Two – Session 1

January 14, 2025 – 7:00 – 8:15 PM

Registration [link](#).

Living into Our Emerging Future – Module Two – Session 2

January 16, 2025 – 3:30 – 4:45 PM

Registration [link](#).

Leading from Within Retreat

Tucson, Arizona

January 19-24, 2025

Registration open.

Living into Our Emerging Future – Module Two – Session 3

February 20, 2025 – 7:00 – 8:15 PM

Registration [link](#).

New Leader Workshop

Baltimore, Maryland

April 3-6, 2025

Registration required but not yet open.

LCWR Assembly

Atlanta, Georgia

August 12-15, 2025

Registration required but not yet open.

LCWR Assembly

Orlando, Florida

August 11-14, 2026

Registration required but not yet open.

Cohort Connections

LCWR Members Born 1960 and Later

Meets the third Tuesday of each month - 7:00 - 8:15 PM ET

LCWR Members Born 1950 - 1959

Meets the fourth Wednesday of each month - 7:00 - 8:15 PM ET

Articles of Interest

- [Former directors reflect on ASEC's gifts, 25-year milestones](#) | [Global Sisters Report](#), October 14, 2024
- [ASEC uplifts 'entire communities' in Africa in 25 years of educating sisters](#) | [Global Sisters Report](#), October 10, 2024
- [Nuns on the Bus, with friends on board, kick off 2024 tour in Philly](#) | [Global Sisters Report](#), October 2, 2024
- [Q&A with Sr. Vicky Larson, LCWR president-elect](#) | [Global Sisters Report](#), September 24, 2024

LCWR Supports Facilitation Learning Group

by Monique Tarabeh, RGS

The Facilitation Learning Group which began in spring 2023 gathered in person in St. Louis, grateful to the full support of LCWR and the warm hospitality of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Expert facilitators Catherine Bertrand, SSND; Joanne Hanrahan, SSND; Barbara Stanbridge, IHM; and Joye Gros, OP guided us through an enriching experience that fostered a deep sense of community, as we embraced the belief that each participant brought valuable wisdom to the table. While not able to be present, Carole Shinnick, SSND who has also been working with the group, sent her blessings.

Our journey was grounded in contemplative dialogue and Theory U, setting the tone through its stages: co-initiating, co-sensing, and co-creating. Throughout our meetings, the facilitators encouraged deep listening and engagement with our collective potential. This process invited us to move beyond habitual patterns of thought and behavior, opening up to new possibilities — a practice that truly embodies “presencing.”

The facilitators generously shared their wisdom. Prayer and discussions about chapter planning, elections, and preparations enriched our experience, deepening our awareness of both the processes and their sacredness. These moments highlighted the transformative power of our shared work, emphasizing its significance not only for us but also for the future of religious life.

On the final day, we looked to the future, asking, “What’s next?” We are excited to continue this learning journey, recognizing its vital role in shaping the evolving landscape of religious life.

This weekend gave us the skills in facilitation and community-building, as we prepare to lead and inspire others in the face of new challenges. Some of us are ready to embrace this adventure, equipped to guide our communities toward a future marked by collaboration and spiritual depth.



Religious Formation Conference Celebrates 70 Years

The Religious Formation Conference (RFC) extends an invitation to its 70th anniversary celebration on November 13 at 7:00 PM EST entitled “(Still) Waking up the World: RFC and Religious Life at 70 Years.” Registration is required and available at this [link](#).

The evening will include prayer and conversation with Nicole Trahan, FMI and Patrick Sean Moffet, CFC, moderated by Nancy Gerth, SCN. The evening will close with a video presentation of “RFC Through the Years.” Further details about the celebration are available at this [link](#).



Participants in the Facilitation Learning Group event in St. Louis

LCWR and CWR Initiate an Organizational Alliance

At its annual conference held from October 8-11 outside of Chicago, the Communicators for Women Religious (CWR) voted to begin a new alliance with LCWR.

CWR had recognized that as it found itself at a financial crossroads it needed to change its organizational model. In the new model, LCWR will provide a paid part-time network coordinator to provide administrative support to CWR. This will allow for the elimination of paid membership and fees for resources. Memberships and opportunities for professional development via CWR's resources will be open to anyone interested. The new model will be dependent upon the work of volunteer committees of CWR members.

CWR voted to dissolve its nonprofit organizational structure and move the administrative structure into LCWR beginning January 1, 2025.

In a letter sent earlier this year to the CWR board, LCWR executive director Carol Zinn, SSJ noted, "Your work to provide professional education and support to those who work to communicate and advance the mission of women religious has been commendable. It has been a delight to see how the organization has responded to the changing realities of institutes of

women religious for these last 30 years and has been an invaluable support.

"We recognize that the dissolution of the organization's current status and transition into a different type of entity is significant. Due to your hard work and careful strategic planning, we believe that the new connection between our organizations will serve the mission of women religious well. We applaud the efforts you have made to assure that communicators will be able to continue this service competently and professionally.

"Our hope is that the new arrangement will serve as a strong support to all who carry on the role of communications for their religious institute. Your ministry is critical to the well-being of religious life."

The new relationship was celebrated through a ritual that included the mingling of waters from both organizations that was used to water a new tree, symbolizing the building of a fresh pathway, rooted in the wisdom of the past and infused with the promise of a bright future.



National Religious Vocation Conference

National Vocation Awareness Week (NVAW) celebrated November 3-9, 2024 is an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic Church in the United States dedicated to promoting vocations to ordained ministry and consecrated life through prayer, invitation, and education. It is also an opportunity to renew prayerful support for those discerning their vocation.

Many resources from the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) are available to share with community members, staff, boards, and ministry sites. Members may use the [Bold and Faithful: Meet Today's Religious](#) or showcase the videos on the NRVC [YouTube Channel](#). Also, members may download resources from the member toolbox at no cost. Additional resources are available for sale in the NRVC [store](#).



Annmarie Sanders, IHM (representing LCWR) and Dusty Krikau (representing CWR) pour mingled waters on a new tree as Joanne Gallagher, CSJ leads the alliance ritual (Photo by Andria Marquis)

National Religious Retirement Office

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) invites religious institutes to its next quarterly webinar, “Spiritual Accompaniment in the Lives of Elder Religious: Discovering and Embracing Life’s Stories” on **Tuesday, November 12 at 1:00 PM ET.**



Presented in collaboration with the Avila Institute of Gerontology, this 60-minute presentation will host Alice Feeley, RDC, who will lead this experience-based webinar exploring the spiritual and emotional concerns faced by elderly religious. Participants will reflect on how changes in perceptions of God, relationships, and prayer, as well as changes in cognitive, emotional, and physical capacities influence their spiritual journey, focusing on the question, “Who am I now that I no longer ...?”

Webinar attendance is free for religious communities and their associates. Registration is available [here](#).

Free informative presentations on a range of aging-related issues may be found at NRRO’s online [archives](#).

Some recent topics include managing community life, finding greater meaning in aging, developing a resilient lifestyle, personality and the aging process, and many more. Webinars are designed for individual members, the leadership of congregations, and their healthcare providers.



Update is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally. All rights reserved © 2024 LCWR

Editor: Annmarie Sanders, IHM
Communications Assistant: Suzanne Delaney, IHM

8737 Colesville Road, Suite 610
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: 301-588-4955 Fax: 301-587-4575
E-mail: asanders@lcwr.org Website: lcwr.org

UISG Offers Online Formation Program for New Leadership Teams

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) is offering an online formation program for new religious life leadership teams, “Heart and Soul of Leadership.”

The four-module program focuses on:

- Responding to the Call (December 3-5, 2024)
- Teamwork (January 14-16, 2025)
- Canon Law (March 24-26, 2025)
- Being Your Best Self (June 11-13, 2025)

The online sessions are held over the course of three consecutive days from 2:00 to 4:15 PM (Rome time) in English with live translation into Italian, French, and Spanish. Other languages may be available on request.

While advertised for those new to religious life leadership, LCWR members may wish to consider participating as a team in the course, no matter how far along they are in their term. More information on the program can be found at [Heart and Soul of Leadership](#).

