

# Update

A Publication of the  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

December 2004

## LCWR Officers Participate in DC Meetings

The officers of the Leadership Conference spent several days in November both meeting together and with other church leaders.

The members of the LCWR executive committee met at Centro Maria in Washington, DC from November 8 - 10. Among the topics on the committee's agenda were: the 2005 LCWR assembly, plans for the LCWR jubilee, the Inter-American Conference, the LCWR budget and other financial matters, and responding to allegations sexual misconduct.

On November 11, the LCWR and CMSM executive committees held a joint meeting.

On November 12, Christine Vladimiroff, OSB; Beatrice Eichten, OSF; Constance Phelps, SCL; Catherine Leary, SSJ; and Carole Shinnick, SSND represented LCWR at a meeting of the Commission on Religious Life and Ministry. From November 15 - 17, the LCWR presidency and Carole Shinnick attended the meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

As further work takes place on the issues discussed at each of these meetings, information will be communicated to the LCWR members.



LCWR executive committee members meet in Washington, DC: (standing) Rose Jochmann, OSF; Mary Catherine Rabbitt, SL; Carole Shinnick, SSND; Catherine Leary, SSJ; Maria Elena Martinez, OSF; (seated) Beatrice Eichten, OSF; Christine Vladimiroff, OSB; and Constance Phelps, SCL



### LCWR Leading from Within Retreat has two spaces available.

The retreat is  
January 16-21, 2005 in Winter Park, Florida.

The directors are:  
Nancy Schreck, OSF and Regina Bechtle, SC.  
Any LCWR member interested in attending is  
asked to contact Suzanne Delaney, IHM at  
[sdelaney@lcwr.org](mailto:sdelaney@lcwr.org) before December 15.

The retreat will be offered again in the same location  
from January 15-20, 2006  
More information to follow.

### Inside this issue:

- 3 Jubilee History Project Update
- 4 Christmas/Holiday Card Campaign
- 6 LCWR Financial Update

## From the LCWR Presidency A New World Can Emerge

by Christine Vladimiroff, OSB -- LCWR President

The Advent-Christmas season situates our life between memory and hope. In the scriptures we are reminded of how God has broken into our world and into our lives. God's coming brings light where there once was darkness, ends captivity and sets a people free. Our monastic community gathers each Saturday evening in Advent for Vigil. Our chapel is almost completely dark except for the candles of the Advent wreath and a small light at the ambo where one of us will give a reflection. We sing the psalms by heart or repeat after a cantor. We listen to God's Word. We remember as a people gathered around the memory of God's faithfulness in the past and the promise to be there in a new way in the future. We allow ourselves to be a community of hope. The Word stirs in us a deep longing for God's peace and justice in our world.



It is not the past that is the focus of our prayer and our joy during this season. Our faith points us toward the future because that is where God intends to meet us once again. The prophets speak to us of outrageous hope for this future. It is a time for which you and I have responsibility as we

*Advent and Christmas are times of dreaming, of desiring the impossible because God promised to be with us until the end of time.*

exercise our leadership in community and Church. Advent and Christmas are times of dreaming, of desiring the impossible because God promised to be with us until the end of time.

Peace is possible. The hint of hope is a seed in our hearts stirred in this season by the absolute enormity of God's promise. What will it take to have peace? What must change in my heart? How can living in community model another way—a way of hospitality to the other? We can have a world in which the poor are no longer hungry. We can arrange our life together on the planet where all children are safe and loved. A new world can emerge, the one intended by God from the beginning. We must dare to take up the invitation of the prophets to be engaged and com-

mitted to disarm our hearts, embrace our enemies and claim justice for the poor. "Our hopes are a measure of our greatness. When they shrink, we ourselves are diminished." (Miroslav Volf)

We cannot wait for the end-time or the nebulous "in days to come" of the prophets of old. Advent-Christmas gives us this time in the present, in between memory and hope, to bring light to the bleakest darkness of human history, whether that be in Iraq or on Main Street where people live on the streets. God's love in us cannot be inactive when someone

suffers.

Parker J. Palmer writes: "We have places of fear inside of us, but we have other places as well—places with names

*The hint of hope is a seed in our hearts stirred in this season by the absolute enormity of God's promise.*

like trust and hope and faith. We can choose to lead from one of those places, to stand on ground that is not riddled with the fault lines of fear, to move toward others from a place of promise instead of anxiety." Advent is a season of the heart. It is time for longing and dreaming. It is a time of preparation to turn to the One who is coming toward us.

Marcel Baross, OSB a monk-theologian from Goias, Brazil writes; "Each Church, and each community is a rehearsal for the Reign of God."

### Registering for New Leader Workshop

Spaces are still available in the New Leader workshop, scheduled for March 17-20 at the Passionist Spiritual Center in Riverdale, New York. The workshop is designed for leadership teams who have been in office for less than two years. Registration deadline is December 15.



For more information, contact Suzanne Delaney, IHM at 301-588-4955 or sdelaney@lcwr.org.

## LCWR Jubilee History Committee Plans for Exhibit

Barbara Cervenka, OP; Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; Helen Garvey, BVM; Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ; and Constance Phelps, SCL, the LCWR Jubilee History Committee, gathered around a table at the Carondelet Center in St. Louis on September 29. The challenge for this diverse group is the development of a proposal for a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian commemorating the 50th jubilee of LCWR (1956 – 2006) and the broader history of religious life for women in the United States (1727--). This idea originated with the membership of LCWR as it discussed the LCWR 50th jubilee celebration scheduled for 2005-2006.



Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; Helen Garvey, BVM; Constance Phelps, SCL; Barbara Cervenka, OP; and Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ

In order to develop a vision for the exhibit, the committee struggled with questions such as:

- Who would be the beneficiaries of the exhibit?
- What is the unique contribution of women religious to our country?
- What is the image of women religious in the church today, in the 50s, in the early days of the republic?
- What is the image of women religious in society today, in the 50s, in the early days of the republic?
- What are the values of women religious?
- What are the critical forces in our church?
- What major losses do women religious fear?
- What are the changes taking place among women religious?
- What do women religious know that we need to know?
- What don't women religious know that we need to know?

The committee focused on the following tasks: the draft of an outline of "Themes and Events," the writing of a prospectus, communication with officials at the Smithsonian, and the search for funding. It agreed that the characteristics of the exhibit would be: scholarship, interaction, education on multiple levels, attractiveness, integrity: form and content communicate life of women religious, simplicity and directness in language and style, and an environment which reflects who women religious are.

The committee will continue to explore the possibility of a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian while also looking at other options. Updates on this project in future issues of the LCWR newsletter will follow.

## Former LCWR President Co-Edits Book on Engaging Impasse

Nancy Sylvester, IHM (1999 LCWR president) recently co-edited with Mary Jo Klick a book entitled *Crucible for Change: Engaging Impasse through Communal Contemplation and Dialogue*.

The book is an invitation to journey with those who entered into a unique process of communal contemplation and dialogue to engage the impasses encountered in church and society. Nancy introduces the stories of 12 women who share how participation in the Engaging Impasse Circles awakened in them fresh insights into being and acting in new ways.

Doris Klein, CSA provided the artwork for the publication. More information on the book is available at <http://www.engagingimpasse.org/newbook.html>.





## NETWORK Board Reflects and Acts on Transformative Change

During their semi-annual meeting, November 4 to November 7, members of the NETWORK board and the NETWORK Education Program (NEP) board worked within the context of the transformational change taking place within the NETWORK structure and the wider context of implications of the 2004 elections. Staff members and associates joined the boards on November 5.

Under the guidance of Maureen Fenlon, OP, interim national coordinator, the staff has been reconfigured into a circular model and, with the assistance of the consultant group, PASO, has integrated into its operations addressing racism and all forms of oppression on a consistent basis. During committee work, plenary sessions, and reflection/prayer times, all considered the impact of the 2004 elections on the organization. During the last session, board members agreed that while lobbying will be more difficult in the next congress, this time may provide an opportunity for listening more intently to the 12,000 NETWORK members around the country and reflecting on multiple ways of continuing the work for social justice and peace.

A key tool for this kind of listening, reflecting, and responding is the Membership Survey that will be incorporated into the January-February 2005 issue of *Connections*. The many LCWR members who are also members of NETWORK are strongly encouraged to complete and return the survey.

With heartfelt gratitude, board members honored the many rich contributions of Maureen Fenlon, OP, interim national coordinator, and Ann Neale, board chair, as their tenures came to a close. The board warmly welcomed the new NETWORK national coordinator, Simone Campbell, SSS, and thanked her for crossing the country to continue the work of transformative change in a challenging time. Thanks were also extended to Jackie Griffith, SSJ, for her willingness to serve as new board chair.

## Jubilee USA Christmas/Holiday Card Campaign

*Add just two recipients to your Christmas card list on behalf of the world's poorest countries: the US Treasury Department and the White House.*

This is the theme of Jubilee USA's campaign which aims to flood the White House and Treasury with holiday cards calling for bold action on debt cancellation early in the new year. The next significant moment for a decision on debt will come at the next G-7 Finance Ministers meeting on February 5, 2005, just a few weeks after the inauguration.

Africa loses more than 6,000 lives a day to HIV/AIDS. African nations send \$15 billion in debt service payments to the IMF, World Bank, and other wealthy creditors each year, while \$10 billion could stem the tide of HIV/AIDS on the continent. Other impoverished nations are unable to provide adequate health care, education and social services to their people because of the weight of debt and debt service that they carry.

Jubilee is encouraged by the US administration's support for 100% multilateral debt cancellation, announced in September 2004. The message now is: *With other G-7 nations, continue to promote 100% debt cancellation, without harmful conditions, for ALL impoverished nations, financed by the sale of IMF gold.*

Individuals may use their own cards, or use the sample card available for download on [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org). Cards can be sent to: US Department of Treasury, 1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20220 and to The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20500.

All are urged to expand the campaign to others.

## 2005 Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace With Justice

The third annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days gathering will be held March 11-14, 2005 at the Doubletree Hotel Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia. The event, "Make All Things New," will take place in the context of a new presidential term, a new Congress and a new opportunity for people of faith to learn together and raise their voices in advocacy for a more just and peaceful world. The event includes visits with congressional offices on March 14. For further information send an e-mail to Anna Rhee, conference coordinator at [info@advocacydays.org](mailto:info@advocacydays.org). For on-line registration and regular updates see [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org).

## The Catholic Coalition Against Human Trafficking

During their October meeting, members of the Catholic Coalition Against Human Trafficking listened to and engaged in conversation with John Bingham of New York, who was involved in the Long Island trafficking case. John spoke not only as a lawyer, but also from a personal perspective since his family took five young trafficked persons into their home until they could be resettled. This presentation brought the issue of human trafficking very close to home.

The coalition welcomed as a guest, Gayla Jamison, a producer working with Maryknoll Productions on a documentary about the trafficking of women and children into the United States for sexual exploitation. When completed, the documentary will be aired on the Hallmark Channel and possibly on public television. Gayla contacted LCWR about the involvement of women religious in this issue and hopes to interview a few members about their work. Following the meeting, Marie Lucey, OSF, who represents LCWR on the coalition informally surveyed members through the LCWR justice and peace contacts to determine which congregations have given some priority to human trafficking. Nine congregations and two coalitions responded and indicated a willingness to be interviewed, if contacted. The increasing commitment of women religious to addressing human trafficking is evident and encouraging.

## Opponents of New Nuclear Weapons Win One

LCWR members who have acted on the 2004 assembly resolution introduced by Region 6 opposing "research, production, testing, use and life extension upgrades of nuclear weapons" can claim a win. One of the suggested actions was to urge elected officials to oppose funding for new nuclear weapons. Recently the omnibus appropriations bill deleted all funds for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator and deleted all funds for the Advanced Concepts Initiative. As a result, there are no funds for new nuclear weapons for FY 2005. While work remains on the other components of the resolution, this is a victory deserving gratitude.

## Catholic Mission Forum Firms Up Plans for Mission Congress 2005

Mission Congress 2005 will be held October 13-16, 2005 in Tucson, Arizona with the theme, "Horizons and Possibilities: The US Church in Mission with the Global Community." The Congress, open to missionaries and those with missionary hearts, will gather on the US/Mexico border to reflect on the question, "What is the responsible contribution of the church in the United States in mission with the global community today?"

Opportunities for immersion experiences will be included. During its meeting on October 29, the forum, of which LCWR is a collaborating member, continued to put details in place.

## LCWR Represented at Interfaith Prayer Service for Children

On October 28, prior to the national elections, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) and the Washington National Cathedral sponsored an Interfaith Service for Justice for Children and the Poor in which religious leaders of many faith traditions participated. Catholics were represented by Carole Shinnick, SSND and Marie Lucey, OSF, LCWR staff; Walter Burghardt, SJ; several NETWORK staff members; and a few additional women religious representing congregations who had endorsed the service. Readings and prayers from the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions were spoken against the background of shameful factual realities of the plight of children within the United States and throughout the world.

At the same time, the several hundred persons who filled the middle aisles of the National Cathedral were inspired by the energy and beauty of two youth choirs. Eloquent speakers, including Marian Wright Edelman, president of the CDF, urged participants not only to exercise their right to vote, but to work beyond the elections to assure a better future for the children in the United States. Information about CDF's movement to Leave No Child Behind can be found at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).

## LCWR Finance Committee Meets

The LCWR Finance Committee met in Silver Spring, Maryland for its fall meeting. The members present were: Rose Jochmann, OSF – Green Bay, WI (chairperson); Alice Cote, RJM; Jean Keniry, OSF-Rochester MN; Mary Bernadette McNulty, CSJ-Orange, CA; Mary Jo Shingler, PHCS –Donaldson, IN; and Eleanor Granger, OSF -- LCWR staff. Absent: Maryann Summa, OP -- Sparkill, NY.

The major agenda items discussed included the following:

**Financial Position:** The LCWR financial position at the end of the third quarter is healthy. LCWR investments continue to recover slowly and hopefully will help in producing a positive bottom line by the end of the fiscal year.

**Membership Dues:** In the last number of years the membership dues have been increased slightly to ensure a balanced budget. The committee discussed the present and upcoming reorganizations and mergers among several congregations. The result of this conversation was a plan whereby LCWR would gather the necessary data from the member congregations to ascertain in broad numbers the membership numbers for the foreseeable future. A plan will be presented to the executive committee and national board by August.

**Jubilee Fund:** As the LCWR jubilee year comes into sight the Finance Committee suggested that congregations be invited to make gifts or loans to the established Endowment Fund and/or consider forgiveness of present loans.

**Investments:** Vincent McNichol, one of the vice presidents of Rittenhouse--Nuveen Company, is the investment manager for the LCWR funds. The Rittenhouse firm concentrates on high quality, large capitalization growth stocks and high-grade intermediate bonds. Mr. McNichol is cautiously positive on investments and the market during the coming year.

**Revision of LCWR Policies on Finances and Investments:** In previous meetings the committee worked on the revision of LCWR policies on finances and investments. They discussed with Mr. McNichol a number of the proposed revisions of the financial, investment, and social responsibility policies.

The final revisions were made to the LCWR financial and investment policies and were recommended for approval to the executive committee and then to the national board.



**Audit Firm:** After some research and discussion the committee recommended a new audit firm to the executive committee for the 2005 Audit.

**LCWR 2005 Budget:** The committee spent quality time examining the draft of the LCWR 2005 budget. The resulting draft of the LCWR budget was recommended to the executive committee in November and will go to the national board for final acceptance.

**Employee Retirement Plans:** The present plans were studied and a recommendation made to the executive committee for a change from a defined benefit plan to a 403b plan. This change was suggested due to the lack of portability of the defined benefit plan.

**Cameron Street Building:** The Cameron Street building is owned by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. During this meeting Brother Matt Wade, SM (CMSM associate director) met with the committee to discuss several items of business regarding the long-range planning for the upkeep of the building as well as the audit results of the past years. A new joint subcommittee was established and will have their first meeting in mid-November. The draft of the 2005 building budget was examined and, following discussion, was recommended to the LCWR national board for approval.

**Future Dates:** The dates for the spring meeting of the Finance Committee are April 8-11, 2005.

## Nomination and Election Committee Explores Electronic Balloting

Members of the LCWR Nomination and Election Committee, Ardis Cloutier, OSF, chair; Nancy Hoff, RSM; Barbara Mass, SLW; Dorothy Scesny, PBVM; and Suzanne Delaney, IHM, liaison, met by conference call on November 15. The committee reviewed and updated material in preparation for the spring nomination process, reviewed names of potential new members to the committee, and discussed the use of electronic balloting should there be a run-off ballot as a result of the spring nominations.

Kent Saunders, LCWR's computer technician, is refining the details for online balloting which will:

- provide more members with an opportunity to cast a run-off ballot from wherever they may be through accessing their e-mail
- expedite the returns and eliminate the committee members counting the ballots
- save considerable paper and postage

Gratitude was extended to Maryann Bremke, CPPS, for her faithful service to the committee during the past several years. She will be replaced at the August assembly meeting.

## Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico Anticipates Events

To honor the 25th anniversaries of the murders of Archbishop Romero and the four North American women, the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico (RTFCAM) is planning a forum in June 2005 in collaboration with Rivier College, titled "Memory, Prophecy, and Hope: The Legacy of the Central American Martyrs." There will also be a small Romero delegation in March 2005. In addition, RTFCAM hosted a book signing event to publicize a new book by Margaret Swedish and Marie Dennis: *Like Grains of Wheat: A Spirituality of Solidarity*, published by Orbis Books, [www.orbisbooks.com](http://www.orbisbooks.com).

## FROM THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

### Religious Leadership Forum: Building Congregational Imagination

The registration brochures are now ready for the Religious Leadership Forum being held April 24-26, 2005 at Shalom Retreat Center in Dubuque, Iowa. David Couturier, OFM Cap and Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ will be the presenters and facilitators for "Building Congregational Imagination: Skills and Strategies for Living Your Community's Corporate Passion," which is based on the best of previous forums.

The workshop is intended for congregational leaders who are interested in organizational dynamics within their institutes. It is geared for leaders who want to build up their congregational imagination and to develop the skills and strategies needed to strengthen congregational commitment. Participants will prepare case studies for use in small group discussions and learn how to use the case studies to deepen congregational learning and decision-making.

"Building Congregational Imagination" will begin on Sunday, April 24 at 3 p.m. and end after lunch on Tuesday, April 26. Registration discounts are available for members of the center. For more information and registration materials, contact [vpiecuch@visioni.com](mailto:vpiecuch@visioni.com).

### Kindling Focuses on Emerging Communities

"Emerging Communities" will be the focus subject for the winter issue of the CSRL newsletter, *Kindling*. The publication will be profiling six communities which started in 1980 or after.

Anyone who has not seen the summer issue with a focus on the reconfiguration of religious institutes, or is interested in receiving *Kindling* twice a year, may contact [csrl@visioni.com](mailto:csrl@visioni.com).



*From the LCWR Executive Director*

## Waiting in Hope

I'll say it loud and I'll say it proud – I'm a Red Sox fan! So - with apologies to any Yankee or Cardinal fans reading this – I was absolutely thrilled when my team won the World Series. I had stayed up beyond midnight several times in a row, as the Sox methodically dug themselves out of a 3-0 hole to win four consecutive games against the Yankees - the last two fittingly enough played in Yankee Stadium. (So much for "the curse of the Bambino!") Then I watched in astonishment as they swept the Cardinals in four straight games.



*Carole Shinnick, SSND*

I cried the night they won the series. I remembered my parents and grandparents, and our neighbors on Grant Avenue – all of whom waited in hope for a series win, but who never saw one. As kids on summer afternoons, we would play in the street while the adults sat on the front porches, watching us and listening to the ball game on the radio. As teenagers, my girl friends and I would take a streetcar into Fenway to watch the Red Sox play. We would sit in the bleachers for fifty cents, getting our summer tans in the bargain. We had crushes on the players of that day - Ted Williams, Jimmy Piersall and Dominic DiMaggio. ("Who's better than his brother Joe? Do-OM-in-ic DiMaggio!") That's why I cried when - after 86 long years - the Red Sox finally won.

Perhaps it's a bit of a stretch to say that the Boston fans are Advent People. But what is definitely true is that they know something of waiting in hope. Waiting in hope is not easy. It is fraught with disappointment and embarrassment. It is hard to stay loyal, to believe in spite of all the evidence, that "next year will be the year." Sometimes people make fun of disappointed people who wait in hope.

I enter Advent 2004 carrying lots of disappointments and a few rather battered hopes. Some disappointments are raw and relate to the very institutions that most define me. It seems to me that I must first lament those disappointments to the God of Hope if my Advent hope and waiting is to be authentic.

I recall a prayer service of several years ago – this one was in the Easter season and the reading had been the Emmaus story. The leader took a small, empty brown paper bag. She passed it around the circle. As it moved through the group, each individual held it on her lap and simply said,

"I had hoped..." echoing the apostles on the Emmaus Road. No one named out loud what she had hoped, but as the little bag went from person to person, voices cracked and tears flowed. It was a necessary step towards recognizing the Jesus who had been there all along.

Advent is such a precious season and it goes all too fast. There are so many distractions – parties, presents, cards, and long to-do lists floating in our heads, popping up in our Palm Pilots. Just stopping and waiting is hardly supported by our culture. Perhaps lamenting our disappointments as prelude to letting our hope arise

---

*I will walk outside in the pre-dawn darkness and  
name to my God all the concerns of my heart.  
I will cry out my, "I had hoped."  
And then I will look towards the east and watch for the  
dawn that I know will come.*

---

is a cultural anomaly as well. Advent also comes at a time when, for us in the Northern Hemisphere, it is the darkest time of the year.

At least once this Advent, I plan to get up very early when it is clear and cold and still. I will walk outside in the pre-dawn darkness and name to my God all the concerns of my heart. I will cry out my, "I had hoped." And then I will look towards the east and watch for the dawn that I know will come.



*Update* is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally.

Editor: Annmarie Sanders, IHM

8808 Cameron Street -- Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 301-588-4955 Fax: 301-587-4575

E-mail: [asanders@lcwr.org](mailto:asanders@lcwr.org) Website: [www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)



## Upcoming LCWR Dates

**LCWR Leading from Within Retreat**  
*Winter Park, Florida*  
January 16-21, 2005

**LCWR Delegation to Mexico**  
February 19-26, 2005

**LCWR New Leader Workshop**  
*Passionist Retreat Center*  
*Riverdale, NY*  
March 17-19, 2005

**LCWR Assembly**  
*Anaheim, California*  
August 19 -- 23, 2005

**LCWR-CMSM Delegation to El Salvador**  
November 30 -- December 6, 2005

**LCWR Leading from Within Retreat**  
*Winter Park, Florida*  
January 15-20, 2006

**LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank,**  
*Franciscan Center -- Tampa, Florida*  
February 12-14, 2006

**LCWR New Leader Workshop**  
*St. Mary of the Lake*  
*Mundelein, Illinois*  
March 30 -- April 2, 2006

**LCWR Assembly**  
*Atlanta, Georgia*  
August 18 -- 22, 2006

Please note that the Systemic Change  
Think Dates have been corrected from the  
last issue of *Update*.

## Upcoming Event for the Religious Formation Conference

**Espiritu de Esperanza: Running to Catch the Spirit**

December 1-4, 2005  
*Crown Plaza Hotel*  
*on the Riverwalk -- San Antonio, Texas*  
*Pre-Congress Workshops: November 28-December 1*