

## LCWR and CMSM National Boards Explore Issues of Collaboration at Joint Meeting

**A**t their annual joint meeting, the national boards of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) explored the topic of collaboration through prayer experiences, business discussions, visioning, and a presentation by Diane Kennedy, OP.

In her address, Diane, associate provost at Dominican University, spoke of collaboration as a strategy leading to the transformation of life and mission. "Collaboration," she noted, "is not just about working together, but rather it is a mindset and way of life that believes that some blessings can come only through other people." She encouraged the boards to name common goals towards which they can work together, noting that "our experiences of collegiality, equality, mutuality, and interdependence can be a gift to the church."

This year's joint board meeting was held at Marywood Retreat and Conference Center in Jacksonville, Florida. The boards met jointly and separately from February 18-21. Among the topics discussed jointly were the following:

- a report on the Commission on Religious Life and Ministry meeting (held February 16 and 17)



*Diane Kennedy, OP*

- initial planning for the joint assembly scheduled for August 2008 in Denver
- possible workshops for LCWR and CMSM members
- a report on the Center for the Study of Religious Life
- preparation for the annual trip of LCWR and CMSM to the Vatican offices in April
- an update on the office building jointly owned by the two conferences in Silver Spring, Maryland

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*The national board meetings took place in Jacksonville, Florida*

*From the LCWR Presidency*  
**‘Empty Chairs at Empty Tables’**

by Mary Whited, CPPS -- LCWR President-Elect

A few months ago, I attended the Broadway musical *Les Miserables*. Though set in the context of the French Revolution, the story reflects universal longings for justice and peace, whatever our differences may be. I was deeply moved by the powerful rendition of “Empty Chairs at Empty Tables.” As I listened, I could not help but wonder if and when the many tables emptied by our young men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan will be filled again.



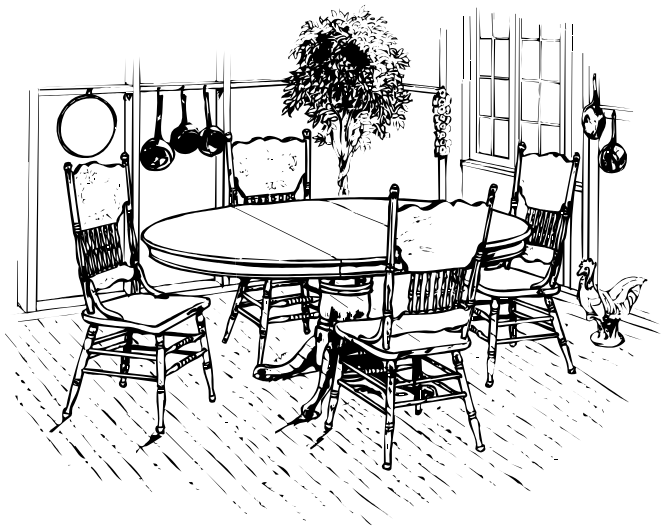
tant work of invitation and dialogue: Expanding our tables to welcome the differences. Strengthening relationships. Shoulder to shoulder. Eye to eye. Sitting in another’s chair for a bit. Establishing connections with those whom we fear. Stirring the wisdom of our elder members, and nurturing the passion of those who are younger. Searching for unity when discord appears. Making room for the Sacred. Reconciling differences. Keeping the dialogue going... going...going!

In many cultures, a table is at a center for family and communal gatherings. At the table we share meals, catch up on daily happenings, remember and tell our stories, pray silently or in our native tongue, voice hopes and struggles, and dream about a future. Around the table, wisdom can be shared, partnerships can be formed, power can be equalized, and rifts can become apparent. The absence of a table can mean poverty and hunger have become a way of life. In Lent, change of heart is connected to simple food upon our tables. Whom we exclude from and whom we welcome at our table reveal what we value. In approaching the table, we can encounter the Sacred. Perhaps that is why Jesus so often gathered others around the table to break the bread and to share the cup.

Last fall in Baltimore, I sat at various tables with the LCWR executive committee, leaders of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, representatives of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, and bishops. A new role as president-elect, in which I represent more than me and my own congregation, takes a bit of getting used to! As my comfort level increased, hope stirred toward fruitful conversation and sustained connections with others seated at these tables. This April I anticipate the travel with Mary, Bea, and Carole to Rome where we will place our wisdom on the tables and will listen to the experience of others who also represent church.

I believe that the place where leadership needs to be today is at the table - engaging in the difficult and impor-

As I pick up the newspaper today, I wonder. What will it take for groups with differing perspectives to sit around a table? What will it take for us to listen to one another from a stance of curiosity rather than of certainty? What will it take to share a meal – Sunnis and Shiites; Israelis and Palestinians; Muslims, Christians and Jews; people of different races and cultures, people who have much and those who have nothing? “Empty chairs” at “empty tables” do not bring peace and justice for all. Tables are meant to be filled!



*“Empty chairs” at “empty tables”  
do not bring peace and justice for all.  
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## LCWR and CMSM National Boards Meet

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### LCWR National Board Meeting

Meeting separately, the LCWR national board discussed a number of topics affecting the conference and religious life in the US. The LCWR regional chairs will update members at the spring LCWR regional meetings about topics that are of particular significance.

Among the agenda items treated by the board were the following:

#### LCWR's Response to Congregations Impacted by the 2005 Hurricanes

At the 2006 LCWR assembly, members asked that the conference consider taking corporate actions to assist the women religious whose lives and ministries were impacted by the 2005 hurricanes. In response to this, LCWR and Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA) will be hiring a grant writer to identify and apply for grants for the financial needs of women religious in the New Orleans area. This will initially be a six-month position, with the potential for extension.

#### Report on the USCCB Meeting

Mary Dacey, SSJ; Mary Whited, CPPS; Bea Eichten, OSF; and Carole Shinnick, SSND reported on the USCCB meeting which they attended in November. While at the meeting they also met with staff from the Catholic Health Association to discuss issues of mutual concern.

#### Follow-Up to CARA Study on Sexual Abuse Policies

Carole Shinnick, SSND has been working with LCWR members Donna Markham, OP; Rosemary Moynihan, SC; and Anne Myers, SSJ to identify existing resources that could assist members who are looking for educational materials in the areas of sexuality and human

development, professional and personal boundaries, sexual abuse, review boards, and safety plans. A list of these resources will be distributed to members later in 2007.

#### Accounting Practices

A report was shared from the USCCB Accounting Practices Committee which included recommendations for all religious congregations to have policies in place on conflicts of interest, whistleblower protection, fraud, record retention, and internal accounting controls. More specific information on this will be shared at the regional meetings.

#### LCWR History Project

LCWR has signed a contract with Bob Weis Design Island, a firm based in Orlando, Florida, to construct the exhibit on the contributions of Catholic sisters to US history. The firm will work in conjunction with the LCWR History Committee towards the goal of opening an exhibit in March 2009. Fundraising efforts also continue.

#### LCWR Nominations and Elections Process

The LCWR executive committee and nomination and election committee have worked on modifying the nomination process for the election of LCWR officers. This new process, which will be explained and implemented at the spring regional meetings, is designed to help the conference continue its election of women with the necessary skills and vision to lead on a national level.

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*The LCWR and CMSM national boards and staff members at Marywood Retreat and Conference Center*



## LCWR and CMSM National Boards Meet

*(continued from page 3)*

### Ministering Together

LCWR secretary Jeanne Bessette, OSF the LCWR representative to Ministering Together, reported on this movement which is dedicated to linking Catholic ministries in a way that provides more effective service to persons in need. More information on Ministering Together will be provided at the spring regional meetings.

### LCWR National Office Staff

As a result of the 2006 study conducted by the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators (NACPA), the LCWR national office underwent some restructuring. The office is now fully staffed with seven full-time employees, one shared receptionist with CMSM, one business manager who works for NATRI and serves all Cameron Five organizations, and one part-time development coordinator for the LCWR history project.

In January, the four staff members serving in director positions held a one-day planning session to reflect on and discuss how the national office can best support LCWR members in their ministry of leadership in this changing time in religious life. Pat Flynn, SSND and Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN joined the staff members or the day as they discussed the call for women religious in the US in the 21st century.

### Exploring LCWR's Identity and Purpose

The LCWR executive committee presented a proposal to the national board for the conference to engage all LCWR members in regions and at the assembly in discussions of LCWR's identity and purpose as it responds to the rapid changes occurring in the world, church, and religious life. The board approved moving forward with this process and appointed a subcommittee to plan it.

Additional reports and discussions were held on other matters of business and planning.

*J. Lora Dambroski, OSF blesses Nancy Reynolds, SP, one of five board members completing terms of service*



*Bob Schieler, FSC; Mary Whited, CPPS; and Mary Jo Nelson, OLVN consider possible themes for the joint assembly*

*Rita Goedken, OSF works with Dominic Izzo, OP on ideas for the 2008 joint assembly*



*LCWR and CMSM board members worked in large group and small group sessions throughout the days*



## Search Begins for New LCWR Associate Director for Business and Finance

by Carole Shinnick, SSND

It is with much reluctance that LCWR announces that the term for Eleanor Granger, OSF, LCWR's associate director for business and finance, will end later this year. Eleanor has done an incredible job in this critical role which she assumed in September 2001.

The position itself demands a constellation of skills because the associate director is responsible for overseeing the finances of the national office, coordinating the sites for the assembly and other LCWR programs, and working with her counterpart in CMSM to oversee the operations of the Cameron Street Building. She works closely with the LCWR's executive director and the conference treasurer.

LCWR is seeking someone with a strong financial background and a former member of LCWR to fill this position. The individual also needs to have skills related to human resource management and facilities oversight. She must be able to travel frequently and to relocate to the Washington, DC – Silver Spring area. Most of all, an applicant needs to be a team player, someone who is flexible and who prefers variety of tasks over routine. LCWR hopes to have the new associate director hired by August 1, 2007 in time of the national assembly in Kansas City. Her responsibilities would begin at the post-assembly meeting of the national board which begins on August 5, 2007. The position is a three year term renewable once for a total of six years.

Please consider contacting persons whom you believe to be qualified and encouraging them to apply. The role description for this position is downloadable from the LCWR website ([www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)) in the password-protected members' information section. Interested persons should send a letter of application and a resume to me at 8808 Cameron Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or electronically to [cshinnick@lcwr.org](mailto:cshinnick@lcwr.org). You are welcome to contact me at the national office (301-588-4955) for additional information.

Eleanor has filled this role so graciously and so well that it will not be easy to replace her. However, Eleanor will

be available for a brief period to orient her successor, which will greatly assist the person and the conference in navigating this transition. Eleanor will be present at the 2007 assembly so that the conference will be able to thank her personally for her generous and outstanding service.

## Faith-based Working Group on Water

The third and fourth meetings of the Faith-Based Working Group on Water were held in Washington, DC on January 23 and February 15. In January, reports were given on public-private partnerships in poor countries by Nancy Alexander of Globalization Challenge, and on the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act by an aide from the office of Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a primary architect of the legislation. Members reviewed a draft of a letter urging Congress to increase US development assistance funding for clean drinking water and adequate sanitation internationally, specifically by implementing the Water for the Poor Act and increasing funding to \$500 million for FY2008.

On February 15, the final form of the letter with signers, including LCWR, was distributed. Sub-committees met to develop their group's advocacy position and 2007 action opportunities and strategies. LCWR and CMSM are part of the group addressing extractive industries and water conservation. During a February 6 meeting of this sub-committee, there was agreement to call on congressional representatives to sign a Dear Colleague letter about proposed mining in northern El Salvador.

## Catholics in Alliance Annual Strategy Meeting

The second annual retreat/strategy meeting of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good took place in Washington, DC January 31-February 2. Following a debriefing of both individual organizations' and alliance activities during 2006 and identifying lessons for the future, participants engaged in work to build the Common Good movement and message. Reports were provided on church environment, legislative environment, and political context as background for development of strategies for 2007. Each participating organization identified its particular resources for building the movement and its geographic mapping. LCWR brings to the table its constituents/members, advocacy work, and educational opportunities.

## Nominations for LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award Due by March 16

All LCWR members have the opportunity to nominate persons for consideration for the LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award. This award is given annually to a person who has significantly contributed to the ministry of leadership and who reflects the LCWR mission.

Criteria for the award are:

- Modeling commitment and collaboration to the ministry of leadership in the wider church and society
- Creative and innovative leadership in the church and society
- Significant contribution as a leader on the national and/or international level, particularly to women religious congregations in the United States
- Prophetic stance in living the Gospel values.

This year LCWR is accepting nominations through an online survey program. On January 15 the national office sent all members a message with a link to the nomination form. The form needs to be returned by **March 16**.

The award will be presented at the LCWR assembly in August. Prior award recipients were Mary Luke Tobin, SL (2003); Theresa Kane, RSM (2004); Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN (2005); and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ (2006).

## Trafficking Coalition Addresses Child Pornography

A discomfiting presentation on child pornography by Jessica Sarra, director of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), provoked questions and discussion during the January 31 meeting of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking. Jessica is the primary author of and researcher for the 2006 ICMEC Report, "Child Pornography: Model Legislation and Global Review," which reviews national legislation currently in place in the 186 Interpol member countries. Jessica noted that only five countries, including the US, meet all of the ICMEC criteria. She also noted that before the Internet, child pornography in the US was nearly stamped out, but the wide exposure now recruits more

people. Jessica encouraged the group to educate others on the connection between trafficking and child pornography. For further information see: [www.icmec.org](http://www.icmec.org) and/or the national website [www.ncmec.org](http://www.ncmec.org).

A second presentation was given by Fr. Don Woznicki, executive director-founder of New Ethos, an organization advocating for truth and goodness in the entertainment industry. He described his work to develop a "Faith in Action" study guide for the film, *Trade*, featuring Kevin Kline, due for release on April 13. A short trailer of the film is available at [www.tradethemovie.com](http://www.tradethemovie.com).

Participants at the coalition meeting divided into two groups: one to provide ideas for the anticipated US bishops' pastoral letter on human trafficking; the other to offer suggestions to Fr. Woznicki for the study guide.

## CHA Holds Annual Retreat/Strategy Meeting

Catholic Health Association (CHA) held its annual retreat/strategy meeting in Phoenix in February. In addition to executive and board committee reports, the board reviewed the 2007-2009 strategic plan. Small groups critiqued sections on mission, ethics, and advocacy and gave feedback to CHA staff. A staff report on advancing CHA's coverage agenda was also reviewed and discussed. While the goal is reasonable, accessible health care for all, the board acknowledged that, realistically, this goal will have to be reached incrementally, with the first phase focusing on health care for children. Brief reports were also given by participating observers, John Carr, USCCB; the president/CEO of Canada's Catholic Conference; and Marie Lucey, OSF, LCWR.



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**Editor:** Annmarie Sanders, IHM

8808 Cameron Street  
Phone: 301-588-4955  
[asanders@lcwr.org](mailto:asanders@lcwr.org)

Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Fax: 301-587-4575  
[www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)

## From the LCWR Executive Director Of Deserts and Ice Storms

It is the first Sunday of Lent today and we are awaiting the arrival of a massive ice storm coming in from the west. For awhile our winter here in the DC area seemed pretty whimpy, hitting the 70s just before Christmas and even into January. Young people were strolling around in shorts and flip-flops as if it were May. And then February began and temperatures took a nose dive.



Carole Shinnick, SSND

Compared with the rest of the country our winter is still pretty mild, but when the precipitation falls in the form of ice, a new kind of paralysis grabs hold of my heart. Even emptying the garbage is dangerous. Cleaning off a car – not to mention getting into a car that is encased in a quarter of an inch of ice – is not a feat for the faint-hearted. I shuffle along the sidewalk in tiny baby steps, conscious that the Actonel I take for osteoporosis hardly makes my bones invincible should I take a spill. I picture a fall with me like a cartoon character shattering into multiple pieces. “Take it slow, Carole – take it slow.”

Dealing with an ice-encased world and its slippery walkways strikes me as a metaphor for our Lenten journey and for this time in our nation’s story. On a very mild Saturday in January I joined about 125,000 marchers at the national mall to protest the troop “surge” called for by the president. It was a brief experience of feeling that maybe we could do something to stop the insanity of the Iraq war after all. The day was beautiful - warming from the morning low of 30

up into the 60s. Parents brought children in strollers. Students sang on the Metro as my friend Janet and I rode downtown: “Where have all the soldiers gone, long time passing?” I listened and cheered as Jane Fonda and Susan Sarandon shouted over the sound system. For a heady few hours I honestly believed that this crowd of parents and students and celebrities and aging boomers could actually make a difference.

But it didn’t. The administration continues to be encased in a bubble of ice just like my car in the parking lot. Even worse, they are taking our country for a terrible ride on very treacherous roads unable to see through the icy windshield. A multi-vehicle accident of global proportions seems inevitable unless someone or something stops us. But what? Or who? While the senate argues about procedural rules, people are blown up and maimed, and millions flee Iraq seeking refuge from the horrific violence. Meantime, we are told that raising our voices in protest as we did on that bright January day shows that our country has “no stomach” for war and that we “give comfort to the enemy.” As a citizen I have never felt so powerless in my whole life. All the marchers and all the letters and all the non-binding resolutions feel like nothing more than a handful of popcorn thrown against a brick wall.

A snowy mix has started to fall. I reread today’s gospel of the temptation of Jesus in the desert as the sleet pelts the windows. Lent begins with a reminder that it is only in powerlessness that God can be God. It is only when I am disabused of any illusion that I have control over anything, that God can do what God can do. Jesus chose powerlessness. But I have been brought kicking and screaming to it. And I will never like it. So, in this desert I try to pray for trust. In this ice storm I try to pray for hope. In this winter I try to pray for spring. In this dark time, I try to pray for Easter.



## Upcoming LCWR Dates

**LCWR New Leader Workshop**  
*The Retreat Center at St. John's*  
*Plymouth, Michigan*  
 March 15 — 18, 2007

**LCWR Assembly**  
*Kansas City, Missouri*  
 August 1 — 5, 2007

**LCWR Leading from Within Retreat**  
*Redemptorist Renewal Center*  
*Tucson, Arizona*  
 January 20 — 25, 2008

**LCWR-CMSM Joint Assembly**  
*Denver, Colorado*  
 August 1 — 4, 2008

**LCWR Assembly**  
*New Orleans, Louisiana*  
 August 11 — 15, 2009

From the  
**Center for the Study of  
 Religious Life**

## New Issue of *Kindling* in the Mail

**K***indling*, the publication of the Center for the Study of Religious Life, should be arriving in the mail boxes of all members of CSRL. This issue, with a new design, focuses on the topic of charism families. Benedictines, Franciscans, Passionists, Maryknollers, and the Daughters of the Holy Spirit are highlighted with the various expressions of their charisms.

The latest issue is available for downloading at [www.religious-life.org/newsletters](http://www.religious-life.org/newsletters). Also available on the same web page are past issues of *Kindling* including those on cultural diversity, emerging communities and reconfiguration.

For anyone who would like to subscribe to *Kindling*, a form is located at [www.religious-life.org/pdfs/solicitation06\\_2.pdf](http://www.religious-life.org/pdfs/solicitation06_2.pdf).

## Catholic Mission Forum Promotes USCMA Conference

**T**he immediate focus of the Catholic Mission Forum is promotion of the annual conference of the US Catholic Mission Association (USCMA) to be held in Austin, Texas, October 26-28, 2007. This year's theme, "Are not our hearts burning?" addresses the spirituality of mission in the 21st century and features keynote speakers Ron Rolheiser, OMI and Gerard Arbuckle, SM with a panel including LCWR member Shalini D'Souza, SCN. Further information can be obtained by e-mailing [meetings@uscatholicmission.org](mailto:meetings@uscatholicmission.org). The January 25 meeting also included initial discussion about theme, program, and site for Mission Congress 2010.

## The Religious Formation Conference's Resource Manual III Now Available

**E**ach RFC member congregation has received a complementary copy of the new resource manual, which features practical how-to information, inspiring examples, and easy-to-adapt sample forms. Topics covered are:

- Professional Ethics for Formation Ministers
- Recordkeeping and Confidentiality
- Welcoming Communities: Best Practices
- Priestly Formation for Men Religious

Additional copies are available for \$50 to RFC member institutes in the US, \$60 for Canadian and Mexican member institutes, and \$70 for member institutes in other countries. Copies are available for \$80 for non-member institutes in the US, \$90 for Canadian and Mexican non-member institutes, and \$100 for non-member institutes in other countries.

Orders can be placed by clicking on the resources page at [www.relforcon.org](http://www.relforcon.org).