

February 2019

LCWR Welcomes Colleagues to its New Offices

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Resource Center for Religious Institutes, and Friends in Solidarity welcomed nearly 70 people to an open house on January 15 as the three organizations began their second month in new headquarters. Representatives from many of LCWR's partnering organizations as well as friends from the area joined the LCWR staff for tours and refreshments. Visitors frequently remarked on the beauty of the new office space.



Conference room ▼



Reception area



Cafe



◀ LCWR staff stands ready to welcome the open house guests: Marie McCarthy, SP; Janette Cahill; Carol Zinn, SSJ; Ann Scholz, SSND; Christine Beckett, SCN; Carol Glidden; and Annmarie Sanders, IHM

From the LCWR Presidency

'You Pray for a Better Dream'

by Sharlet Wagner, CSC — LCWR President

I write this column from my bedroom at our convent in Kyarusozi, Uganda, where I am visiting our sisters who minister at a rural health center.

Uganda's fertile soil and natural beauty have earned it the nickname "the Pearl of Africa." But that natural beauty lives side-by-side with tremendous poverty, a result of colonialism, corruption, and years of warfare.

Yesterday, I and a visiting doctor from the United States met with a local doctor. As we sat together in the convent community room the Ugandan doctor talked at length of the desperate health needs in his country. He spoke about his frustration over government corruption and the lack of basic resources that leave so many suffering from preventable or easily-treatable diseases. Then, with weariness in his eyes and a touch of frustration in his voice he sighed and said, "You lay your head on your pillow and you pray for a better dream."

Those words seem to me to express the sentiment of so many as we enter into a new year. Refugees are denied refuge, the sexual abuse crisis in the church continues, climate-change forecasts become ever more dire, and government officials too-often ignore the public good in favor of self-promotion. As we begin 2019, people around the world pray for a better dream. What response can we women religious make to the frustration and bone-deep weariness of so many of our sisters and brothers? What do we have to offer?

As I tried to get in touch with that question, two words arose within me: "resistance" and "hope." Resistance has been a rallying cry for many of us since the 2016 presidential elections. We have resisted the policies of



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the administration around immigration, healthcare, climate change, women, budget priorities. We have marched, signed petitions, sent letters, and made phone calls. Our resistance has been vocal, visible, and sustained.

However, a less visible form of resistance lies deep within we women religious and sustains our more vocal resistance. This resistance is rooted in faith. It is a resistance that simply refuses to accept the message that compassion is outdated, that we humans are destined for division, that it's a dog-eat-dog world, that nothing can be done. It is a determination to resist despair, to resist fatigue, to resist a sense of futility. It is a fierce stubbornness that refuses to allow the fires of hope to die. At times, when the day-after-day onslaught threatens to overwhelm us, it is a resistance combined with hope that is a sheer act of will.

As elected leaders of religious communities, hope is part of our job description. We do not have the luxury of despair. While some political leaders seek to divide through promotion of fear, we women religious are called to gather through promotion of hope. We speak a Gospel message, and we resist. And as part of our resistance we delight, we hope, we cry out that life is good, God is good, people are good. In the face of so many reasons to despair, to focus on the darkness, to descend into gloom, we speak authentically of light and we model hope. As we move through 2019 may we laugh more loudly, speak more boldly of compassion, and delight in the goodness around us. May we offer a better dream, for our church, or our country, for our world.

Upcoming Leadership Formation Opportunities

All LCWR members are encouraged to consider the following 2019 opportunities for further leadership formation.

The annual **Leading From Within Retreat** will take place from February 10 to 15 at Bethany Center in Lutz, Florida. LCWR members are invited to hold the retreat participants and facilitators in prayer during this time. There are still three places available in this retreat.

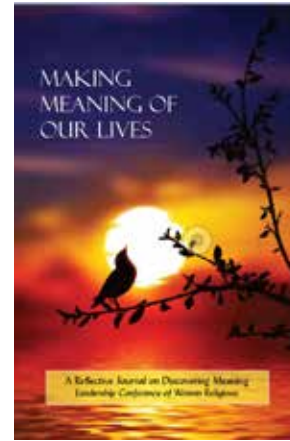
Registration is now open for the **New Leaders Workshop** which will be offered from April 4 to 7, 2019 at the Retreat and Conference Center at St. Mary of the Lake University in Mundelein, Illinois. This workshop is highly recommended for LCWR members who are in the first or second year of their leadership terms. Members are encouraged to consider attending as a leadership team in order to enhance the experience and strengthen the ability to incorporate learnings into the ongoing work of the team.

The new **Practicing Leadership Workshop** will be offered from September 17 to 19, 2019 at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, Illinois. Registration for this workshop will open in early February.

Information on each of these offerings can be found by following the links that go to the LCWR website. Some financial assistance is available for the workshops.



2018 Leading from Within Retreat



Order the 2019 LCWR Reflection Book

LCWR is producing a new 2019 reflection book, **Making Meaning of Our Lives**. This collection of reflections written by more than 40 LCWR members builds on an insight shared by LCWR 2018 president Teresa Maya, CCVI that “our new apostolic call is centered on meaning.” She said, “We need to tell our story, the deep meaning of our lives, that allowed us to do everything we have done.... Our story needs to be shared with a world desperate for meaning and purpose.”

In their reflections, the writers share how they practice meaning-making by describing how they understand and make sense of what happens in their lives. By sharing stories from their own journeys, they provide inspiration for the readers to find deeper meaning and purpose in their own lives, especially as we grapple with the larger questions of life.

Artwork by Catholic sisters, as well as questions and suggestions for deepening the reader’s own prayer, accompany the reflections.

The cost of each book is \$6.00, plus shipping and handling. Discounted prices are available for orders larger than 10 copies. Copies may be ordered online. Revenue from this LCWR project helps defray the costs of the resources and programs the conference provides its members.

Questions about orders may be directed to LCWR’s administrative assistant, Carol Glidden, at cglidden@lcwr.org. LCWR will only print the number of copies that are pre-ordered. **Orders must be received by March 1, 2019.** This is a pre-order. The books will be printed in March and mailed in April 2019.

GHR Foundation Invites LCWR Into Consultation Process on Religious Life

The GHR Foundation invited several LCWR members and staff as well as others working on behalf of religious life to a two-day reflective process that looked at GHR's Sister Support initiatives. The foundation is currently funding several projects that seek to ensure "a vital future for Catholic sisters, marked by congregations that are well-led, well-resourced, and powerful in spiritual witness and service."



The reflective process, held on January 9 and 10 on the Georgetown University campus in Washington, DC, explored what might be emerging for Catholic sisters over the next five years and what might help religious institutes discern and plan for new futures.

Sharon Euart, RSM, (RCRI executive director); Jessie Szopinski (GHR); Manisha Bharti (GHR); Sr. Mary Christine Cremin, RSM (CMSWR executive director); Carol Zinn, SSJ (LCWR executive director); Stephanie Still, PBVM (NRRO executive director); Kathleen Mahoney (GHR); Cecilia Sierra Salcido, CSM (AHLMA executive director); Pat Cormack, SCSC (LCWR member); Ann Lacour, MSC (LCWR member); Annmarie Sanders, IHM (LCWR director of communications); Mary Hughes, OP (LCWR director of transitional services); Maryann Lopiccolo, SC (NCVR president); and Sue Weber (facilitator)

Mary Hughes, OP, LCWR director of transitional services, gave a report of what she has learned in her work providing pastoral support to leaders of communities discerning their future. This work has been supported by a five-year grant from the GHR Foundation.

Winter 2019 Occasional Papers Available



The Winter 2019 edition of LCWR's *Occasional Papers* is in the mail. This issue focuses on Activating Compassion as a Force for Good. [Some extra copies are still available for purchase online.](#)

EMERGING QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

What is the current situation in religious life asking of us for THE FUTURE?



Upcoming LCWR Dates

Leading from Within Retreat
Bethany Retreat Center | Lutz, Florida
February 10 – 15, 2019

**LCWR Practicing Leadership: How to Embrace
a Vital and Vibrant Future Workshop**
Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center
Marriottsville, MD
March 4 — 6, 2019

LCWR New Leader Workshop
Conference Center
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois
April 4 — 7, 2019

LCWR Assembly
Scottsdale, Arizona
August 13 — 17, 2019

**LCWR Practicing Leadership: How to
Embrace a Vital and Vibrant Future Workshop**
Carmelite Spiritual Center | Darien, Illinois
September 17 — 19, 2019

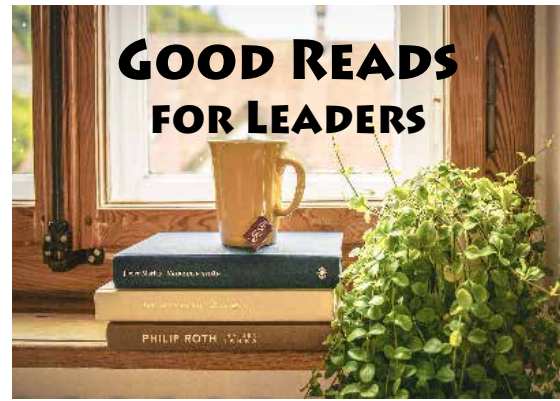
Leading from Within Retreat
Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona
January 12 – 17, 2020

LCWR New Leader Workshop
Conference Center
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois
March 26 — 29, 2020

Imagining Justice
Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center
Marriottsville, MD
April 20 – 23, 2020

LCWR Assembly
Dallas, Texas
August 11 — 15, 2020

Leading from Within Retreat
San Pedro Retreat Center
Winter Park, Florida
January 10 – 15, 2021



Stars at Night: When Darkness Unfolds as Light
By Paula D'Arcy
Franciscan Media, 2016

Recommended by Yvette Bellerose, SP

Paula D'Arcy is a master poet, storyteller, and pilgrim on the road named life. In *Stars at Night*, D'Arcy conveys through narration, poetry, and reflection how we can enter the darkness for which we could never be prepared and then emerge knowing a Presence deep within ourselves. In mysteriously graced ways, light breaks into common experiences of darkness in the same way that dusk leads to night and night leads to dawn.

This book is divided into three parts: The Dark, Mist, and The Dawn. "The Dark" calls to us over and over again. The question is: "How will you meet your life?" In Part Two, "Mist," we step out of the dark and realize we are looking differently at life. A shift takes place. We shed layers of our lives lived before the darkness. We move into quiet and new patterns of living.

In Part Three, "The Dawn," D'Arcy quotes Thoreau: "Only that day dawns to which we are awake." This is the awakening of the heart wide open to wonder, intuition, and divinity, known everywhere, in all life. "The web of life is intricate and profound." We are called to "move through life releasing more Love into the world."

For me, this book was a journey into darkness, into light, into wonder, into Love. The themes drew me to aging in grace, to personal contemplation and journaling, and to possible faith-sharing in community.



Staff from LCWR and the Franciscan Action Network greet Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi at the interfaith prayer service: Maria Orlandini, OSF; Ann Scholz, SSND (LCWR); Congresswoman Pelosi; Patrick Carolan; and Marie Lucey, OSF

House Members Beginning of the 116th Congress with Bipartisan Prayer

On January 3, members of the House of Representatives gathered with family, friends, and members of the faith community to open the 116th Congress with prayer. The chaplain of the House, Patrick J. Conroy, SJ, led the interfaith service that was held at St. Peter's on Capitol Hill. Fr. Conroy opened the bipartisan prayer service by urging those gathered to embrace their vocation as legislators and to listen carefully to God's call to care for the common good.

The variety of readings and the selection of readers reflected the changing face of Congress. While Congress remains overwhelmingly Christian and male, the 116th Congress does look different. The House welcomed the first two Muslim and the first two Native American women to its ranks. They join 34 Jews, three Unitarian Universalists, three Hindus and two Buddhists and a record number of women in the 116th Congress where women will make up nearly a quarter of both chambers, the highest percentage in US history.

A look at the religious affiliation of members reveals that Catholics are overrepresented in 116th Congress. According to the [Pew Research's Centers Religion and Public Life](#), 163 members, almost one-third (30.5%) of the 535 members of Congress identify as Catholic, while only 21 per cent of the of U.S. adults call themselves Catholics. Pew's research also shows that a growing number of members of Congress decline to specify their religious affiliation. This group numbers 18, up from 10 members in the 115th Congress.

LCWR to Co-Sponsor Delegation to Honduras, March 18-25

LCWR joins the SHARE Foundation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity in sponsoring the **Interfaith Root Causes Pilgrimage to Honduras**. The delegation is timed to mark the 39th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Oscar Romero, which will be commemorated in Honduras this year, with a theological forum to reflect on St. Romero's message in light of today's Honduran context.



The delegation will be hosted by Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno (Padre Melo) of Radio Progress/ERIC, and School Sister of Notre Dame, Rosa Maria Trochez. Delegates will visit communities impacted by the repression, militarization, and impoverishment that is compelling thousands to flee their homes in search of safety in the United States.

The past months have witnessed the courage and determination of Central Americans traveling north in search of safety. Organizers seek to shine a light on the forces that compel individuals to leave their homes in desperate search of protection and to discuss the US role in the root causes of migration.

The \$950 fee for the March 18-25 Interfaith Root Causes Pilgrimage to Honduras includes ground transportation, food, lodging, interpreters, and support to the host. It does not include airfare. More information and an application to join the delegation can be found [here](#) or by contacting Jose Artiga at Jose@share-elsalvador.org or 1-415-558-8634.



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

Standing Against Racism Resource Sharing Column



Open Wide Our Hearts: The enduring call to love

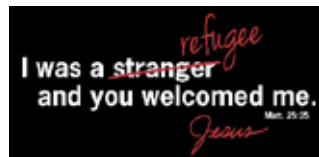
Reviewed by Gemma Doll, OP

The United States Bishops' effort to address racism within our church and country is commendable and calls for conversion with the words from Pope Francis, let no one "think that this invitation is not meant for him or her." It is long past time that the church confront the sin of its own racism.

Unfortunately, the tone of their recently published pastoral letter on racism, "[Open Wide Our Hearts: the enduring call to love](#)," seems didactic, and it lacks adequate expression of indignation considering the damage that centuries of systemic oppression has wrought. Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans are still objectified, without acknowledging their amazing contributions to the American church. The bishops missed the opportunity to give voice to the stories and yearning of people who are the heart of the church, and who are too often portrayed as victims. The pastoral letter can too easily be read in the context of "us and them" rather than "we." With the bishops, we affirm the foundational message of the Gospel that all of us are beloved of God and made in the image of God. Can we, who carry bias and racist attitudes, beg for forgiveness, open wide our hearts, and make a space at the table for all, especially for those who are different from us?

LCWR Opposes Administration Rule That Threatens Asylum Seekers

LCWR submitted a comment in opposition to the administration's new Interim Final Rule, "[Aliens Subject to a Bar on Entry Under Certain Presidential Proclamations; Procedures for Protection Claims](#)," that would make it more difficult for asylum seekers to find safety in the United States.



The comment argues that all human beings are children of God and deserve to live in dignity. While people have the right to live and thrive in their home countries, they also have the right to migrate if conditions do not allow them to live in safety and dignity in their countries.

Likewise, every country has a responsibility to control its own borders in order to ensure safety. That responsibility includes the duty to protect migrants presenting themselves at its border, particularly those who are forced to migrate due to violence and persecution in their home countries.

LCWR pointed out that the rule fails on many levels. First, it fails to fulfill the United States' international and domestic legal obligations. As a nation of refugees and immigrants, the United States willingly obligated itself to provide the protections laid out in the [UN Convention Regarding the Status of Refugees of 1951](#) and the [UN Protocol Regarding the Status of Refugees of 1967](#). Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980 to incorporate these obligations into U.S. law. The interim final rule contradicts the language of these international and domestic laws. Neither the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), nor the president have the power to unilaterally amend the law.

Secondly, the proposed rule fails a basic moral test. Allowing individuals and families to seek asylum regardless of how they enter the United States is not only the law, it is humane policy. Our law on this matter flows from the experience that people fleeing for their lives have a desperate need to get themselves and their children to safety.

Finally, responding to that need is the moral obligation of all civilized societies. Our common humanity demands that the United States offer protection to vulnerable children and families fleeing from Central America to the southern border. They are seeking protection from lawlessness, violence, and persecution. Many qualify for asylum or other US legal protections. They have a right to avail themselves of those protections. LCWR urged the administration to restore and strengthen the US asylum system at the border and asked DHS and DOJ to rescind this Interim Final Rule and the president to rescind the corresponding Proclamation.

Members of the Faith Community Oppose Attempt to Weaken Clean Water Act

LCWR joined other faith-based organizations in issuing a joint statement condemning the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) attempts to circumvent environmental protections some of which have been in place since 1972.



Just before Christmas the Trump administration took action to weaken key parts of the Clean Water Act by proposing a new rule on water. The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers agencies jointly proposed exempting polluters from important programs that require them to prevent and clean up water pollution by removing protections from certain streams, wetlands, and other water bodies.

The statements' authors point out that the new rule, "[Waters of the United States Rulemaking](#)" would wipe out safeguards for streams that provide drinking water to tens of millions of people, including vulnerable populations such as children, and for wetlands that filter pollution and protect communities from flooding. They argue that water is a fundamental component of all life; it is integral to physical and spiritual wellbeing. Stewardship of water is part of the call to care for God's creation. For more than four decades, the Clean Water Act has helped to ensure that bodies of water are clean and safe. This new rule from the Trump administration will remove these vital protections. Replacement of the Clean Water Rule is ill advised, even dangerous.



Update is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally. All rights reserved © 2019 LCWR

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- Letter to Congress calling for an immediate shutdown of the immigrant detention center in Tornillo, where thousands of children are imprisoned, to ensure that no other such centers are built or used to replace it, and to assure a safe, humane, and expedited transition for the children into the care of their families or sponsors. LCWR (12/17/18)
- Interfaith statement objecting to the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to revamp the Mercury and Air Toxic Standards and threatening the health of all people particularly, pregnant women, infants, children, and communities of color in jeopardy. LCWR (12/19/18)
- Support for the Freedom of Religion Act in the 116th Congress. The bill guarantees that immigrants and refugees may not be denied admission or entry to the United States, or other immigration benefits, because of their religion. LCWR (12/18/18)
- Letter to Lauren Alder Reid, Assistant Director, Office of Policy of the Executive Office for Immigration Review, opposing the White House, DOJ, and DHS joint Final Interim Rule (83 FR 55934) and Presidential Proclamation intending to shut off asylum protections for those seeking entry to the United States outside regular processing at ports of entry. LCWR (1/2/19)
- Letter to members of Congress from the Declaration for American Democracy Coalition in support of HR 1 reforms. LCWR (1/2/19)
- Comments in opposition to the new Interim Final Rule, "Aliens Subject to a Bar on Entry Under Certain Presidential Proclamations; Procedures for Protection Claims" (83 FR 55,934; EOIR Docket No. 18-0501). LCWR (1/6/19)
- Endorsement of the Immigrant Witness and Victim Protection Act of 2019 which would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the annual numerical limitation on U visas, and require the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant work authorization to aliens with a pending application for nonimmigrant status. LCWR (1/9/19)

National Religious Retirement Office

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) offers education and resources that can help religious institutes enhance eldercare and strengthen retirement planning. To this end, **Management and Continuing Education Assistance (M/CE)** furnishes distributions of up to \$5,000 per calendar year for the ongoing education and training of key management and health-care personnel as well as for the acquisition of basic management tools.



Distributions may be used for purposes including, but not limited to:

- Participation in educational workshops and conferences, such as those sponsored by the National Catholic Development Conference (NCDC) and the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI)
- An NRRO Eldercare Consultation
- Financial assistance to underwrite forecasting software and related training and support
- Purchase of computers, software, and training for first-time computerization of accounting and/or development functions

Additional information about and applications for M/CE can be found [online](#) or by contacting Karen Canas at the NRRO -- kcanas@uscgb.org or 202-541-3215.



In an effort to enlarge its collective digital footprint, NRVC has expanded its YouTube Channel to 54 videos including keynote presentations from its biennial Convocation since 2008. These videos can be accessed by the public at no additional cost. Consider using these videos for the upcoming World Day for Consecrated Life and inviting members of your religious institute to view them for discussions on vocation ministry.

Due to the generosity of the GHR Foundation, NRVC has partnered with CARA to survey all religious institutes and societies of apostolic life to learn more about understanding religious life and religious vocations in the United States. The first part of the survey was recently sent to all major superiors, prioresses, and provincials. The second part of the survey will be sent in early spring to members who entered religious life from 2003 to 2018. NRVC needs the help of leaders in completing the survey regardless if their congregations have had newer vocations, have stopped accepting new members, or are no longer promoting vocations to religious life. More information about this important work can be found [online](#).



ForMission Strengthens a Formator's Impact

ForMission participants form a supportive peer community and explore personal and communal transformation for the sake of communal life and mission in the context of religious life, the church, and world in the 21st century.

The next ForMission class will begin soon and the first session will be held from **May 30-June 7, 2019** at Catholic Theological Union. Interested applicants should fill out and submit [an inquiry form](#). The application deadline to begin ForMission May/June is March 29, 2019.

Inquiries can be sent to Connie Schoen, OP, RFC program director by email at cschoen@relforcon.org or by calling the RFC office at 773.675.8362.



by Joan Mumaw, IHM
President
www.solidarityfriends.org

The New Year, 2019, has begun. Friends in Solidarity is in a new office with LCWR and RCRI, a significant upgrade to our previous office and still with friends and supporters.

Solidarity with South Sudan has produced a report on the impact of ten years of ministry by the staff, representing multiple congregations and countries over this period of time. This report illustrates the impact of your support, financial, in personnel and through your prayerful accompaniment of the projects. [A Better Future for South Sudan](#)

The impact is significant in a country that has so little capacity in the areas of education, health care, and agriculture. Solidarity graduates are eagerly sought by dioceses, NGOs and the South Sudan government because of the quality of the training they have received. Solidarity is setting a high bar for all other service providers, including the government. Friends in Solidarity began the year with the appearance of a significant article in *Global Sisters Report*. The Q and A by Chris Herlinger provides much information for those who want to know more about the work of Solidarity and the situation in South Sudan. We are grateful to Chris and GSR for helping us raise awareness of Friends in Solidarity and our partner organization, Solidarity with South Sudan. [Global Sisters Report Q and A](#)

We thank all of the congregations who have, in any way, contributed to the support of this important ministry. With some additional office assistance, we hope to grow our support for the work in South Sudan during this coming year. For more information on how you can support this work contact jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com or visit our website www.solidarityfriends.org.

News from the UN

February 6—International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM

Ending the practice of female genital mutilation would have profoundly positive effects across societies as girls and women reclaim their health, human rights, and vast potential. The UN and NGOs affiliated with the UN have learned important lessons about what can be done to end this practice which reflects deep-rooted inequality and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls.



February 20—World Day of Social Justice

The UN recognizes that social justice is essential for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of its global mission to promote development and human dignity. Social justice lies at the heart of the work of the UN and includes promoting gender equality and the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants, and removing barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or disability.

Third National Convocation for Justice Promoters Scheduled for March 2019

The third biennial gathering of justice promoters working with congregations of women religious will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Airport Hotel, March 25-27. This year's theme, "Racism: Through the Prism of Social Justice," invites participants to examine the roots of systemic racism and explore the difficult work of purging ourselves, our communities, and our country of the sin of racism and its destructive effects. Registration information is available at www.jcwr.org. The deadline for registration is **February 23**.

