Blog



Voters arrive to cast ballots at the Webster School in Manchester, New Hampshire, shortly after polls opened in the New Hampshire presidential primary election Jan. 23. (OSV News/Reuters/Mike Segar)



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***Editor's note**: Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*

Monday Starter

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, or LCWR, has initiated a campaign focusing on ways of engaging and examining the November 2024 U.S. national election campaign.

The effort to bring grace into a year that many observers predict will be marked by a contentious political season is being done through the lens of transformative justice, which focuses on addressing long-standing acts and patterns of oppression.

The yearlong effort, entitled "Transforming Grace: The Work of Transformative Justice," began in November 2023 and continues through November of this year.

The campaign "invites participants to take responsibility for the personal and collective responses we can make in the challenges we will encounter during the national election period," LCWR said in an online description.



A screenshot of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious' campaign "Transforming Grace." (GSR screenshot)

LCWR said it is inviting its members "to engage the members of their own institutes in this collective discernment on 'What is ours to do in this time?' "

It noted that "the work of transformative justice is grounded in contemplation and is an engagement in learning the skills and practices that will lead to decision-making and action that leads to being in right relationship with Earth and all human persons."

In the announcement, LCWR said the initiative follows the liturgical calendar, with participants "receiving a weekly or monthly one-page reflection guide that includes: a short video, a brief reading, two or three questions intended to deepen conversation, and a prayer grounded in our contemplative commitment."

The materials, the announcement said, are designed to be used in group settings such as leadership teams, as well as "justice committees, employee groups, and gatherings of sisters and partners in mission. Each reflection tool will be designed for a 60-75 minute session."

The first reflections occurred from late November through the Christmas season and focused on "Transforming Consciousness."

The schedule for the current and upcoming reflections are:

- Transforming Presence: January 2024 thru Lent into Easter (weekly reflections);
- Transforming Care: Easter Season into Pentecost 2024 (periodic reflections);
- Transforming Practice: June 2024 thru November 2024 (periodic reflections).

The reflection guides are available here.

LCWR is the association of the leaders of about two-thirds of the nearly 40,000 Catholic sisters in the United States.



An attendee points to a sign as women religious from around the world gather in Rome in 2019 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Talitha Kum, an international network of religious women fighting human trafficking. (CNS/Courtesy of International Union of Superiors General)

New Talitha Kum anti-trafficking phone app released

The International Union of Superiors General, or UISG, has announced the creation of a phone app through its anti-human-trafficking ministry Talitha Kum to help spread awareness about human trafficking and promote its prevention.

The "Walking in Dignity" app was formally launched during a Jan. 30 online event.

In an announcement of the launch, UISG said "the walking application invites to walk on this journey toward awareness of human trafficking and its prevention."

"It is an invitation to all, particularly young people, to download this app and engage," the announcement said. "The application is designed to learn, engage and care about the people facing human trafficking and to care for, heal and empower

survivors."

In describing the new application, the announcement said it "offers features such as a virtual journey for collecting tokens in tandem with real-life steps. Simultaneously, users can gain insights into various perspectives on human trafficking while earning steps."

The creation of the app was made possible through the collaboration and support from several partners, the announcement said, including Misean Cara, the Embassy of Ireland to the Holy See, the Embassy of the United States to the Holy See, the Galileo Foundation and the Global Solidarity Fund.

Talitha Kum is an international anti-trafficking network of more than 6,000 sisters.



Good Shepherd Sr. Winifred Doherty, who is her religious congregation's U.N. representative, speaks about human trafficking at the U.S. Capitol in Washington May 15, 2018. She is among sisters who will attend the 62nd session U.N.'s Commission for Social Development Feb. 5-14. (CNS/Tyler Orsburn)

Sisters participating in upcoming UN development meeting

Sisters engaged in advocacy work at the United Nations will be attending the 62nd session of the global body's Commission for Social Development, a group which provides advice to the United Nations on pressing social development issues.

The commission, which will meet Feb. 5-14 at the United Nations headquarters in New York, is a key body in promoting the U.N.'s development goals, particularly in efforts to eradicate poverty.

An overall theme for the upcoming meetings will be in promoting social policies to help accelerate the U.N.'s ambitious 2030 sustainable development goals.

It will also focus on the emerging issue of digital transformation in "inclusive growth and development."

Sr. Winifred Doherty, U.N. representative of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, is among the sisters and other religious who will be attending the 10-day event. She told GSR that the meeting could be a needed boost in rekindling collaboration between UN-member states and non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, like hers.

Doherty and other sisters have previously said that relations between NGOs and U.N. member states have been strained in recent years, with NGOs often feeling on the outs at the world body.

"It is surprising that in the midst of so much dysfunction at the U.N. there are parallel process at work large and small to return to a spirit of multilateralism and trust," Doherty said in an email.

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She credits the NGO Committee for Social Development, a group of NGOs working at the United Nations, as being "a hope-filled light in the preparation for this commission," and that meetings between member states and NGOs in preparation for the commission have been hopeful.

Doherty credits the leadership of Daughter of Wisdom Sr. Jean Quinn, who heads the NGO committee, for helping foster good relations between the NGOs and member states in the planning for the February meetings. Quinn is the executive director of UNANIMA International, a U.N.-based advocacy coalition of sister congregations.

Doherty added that religious at the United Nations "are in all sorts of coalitions with a wide range of 'side events' (during the commission), shining a light on the work at the grassroots level" that support the work of faith-based NGOs, like sister congregations, at the U.N.