

LCWR REGION 9 SPRING MEETING MINUTES
IN-PERSON, JESUIT RETREAT CENTER, OSHKOSH, WI
APRIL 28-30, 2025

MONDAY, APRIL 28, 2025

WELCOME

At 1:00 p.m., the Jesuit Retreat Center retreat host, Tania, welcomed the sisters and shared details about the Center and its amenities.

INTRODUCTIONS

The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi (Lake-OSF) hosted the meeting, and the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) served as prayer leaders. Two Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in LaCrosse introduced themselves as first-time attendees.

OPENING PRAYER

The School Sisters of Notre Dame led the opening prayer, “The Woman Next to You.” A few quiet moments of reflection were taken before sharing with the sister to their left and right, “What word or phrase speaks to your heart today?” The group then had the opportunity to share insights from their one-on-one discussions with the large group. The prayer time concluded with the sharing of the song “Go Gently, Go Lightly” by Lori True.

CONSENT AGENDA

Sylvia Ann Sheldon, OSF, presented the consent agenda for approval, which included the meeting agenda, minutes from the fall LCWR9 meeting held on November 11-13, 2024, and the finance report dated March 31, 2025. After two corrections were made to the minutes, all three items were approved.

UPDATES/LIAISON REPORTS

Legislative Network

Rose Jochmann, OSF, reported on the focus and activities of the LCWR9 Legislative Network, of which she is the liaison.

- The members of the LCWR Region 9 Legislative Network have been invited to give a presentation at the LCWR9 meeting (November 17-19) at Siena Center in Racine about how best to be responsive and responsible with LCWR9 members and their mission during the current times in the U.S. and the world.
- There are ongoing collaborations between congregations on the following issues and related legislation: immigration, human trafficking, climate justice, and peace and non-violence, which mirrors the national LCWR focus.
- During the JCWR Convocation, a group of 20-30 promoters gathered to discuss the desire for collective action and to send a common message from Catholic Sisters in these times.

Rose requested that another LCWR9 member take her place as liaison on the LCWR9 Legislative Network. The liaison’s role is to bring information from LCWR9 to the network and to convey information from the Network back to LCWR9. Network meeting attendance by the liaison is recommended, usually via Zoom.

Wisconsin Religious Collaborative

WRC Shared Services Director Sharon Glumb, SLW, summarized her written report to the LCWR Region 9 Spring Gathering 2025, detailing her activities since November 2024, when she assumed her role. She emphasized that the survey of congregations was completed by ten groups by the end of February, allowing sufficient time to compile the responses. The board will be meeting in July to review the survey results.

Human Trafficking Initiative

Materials on human trafficking that LCWR9, WRC, and Network made available can no longer be hosted on the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross website. WRC/LCWR9 members will host the effort on their website, and a way to publicize it to parishes in the state will be created.

Maryann is the new contact person with Star Marketing. She renewed the contract for 2025 to 2026 for the anti-human trafficking ad campaign Region 9 has sponsored for years in the Northwoods Region (HWY 151 South, HWY 29 West Wausau, Northwest Region, Appleton, and Fox Valley). The cost per congregation if the eleven continue to support it is approximately \$165 per congregation. Ten communities are sponsoring an ad in the tourism magazine for the Northwoods (*UpNorth Action*), published bimonthly or quarterly, and a card rack with 10,000 two-sided full-color brochures, which are an alert about human trafficking.

Other anti-trafficking initiatives include:

- Sisters Against Human Trafficking, now Alliance, may be a group with which to collaborate.
- The Legislative Network will address the topic of human trafficking this fall.
- Six LCWR9 congregations support the Sisters South program. Cuts in government grants may be forthcoming and could impact their funding.

Five minutes of table time were allocated to discuss the campaign and its associated costs. After group sharing, the sisters decided to pay the total due for the ad campaign from LCWR9 funds for three years.

LCWR Regional Leaders Meeting

Mary Kay Brooks, SSND, gave an update from the February LCWR regional leaders' meeting. She shared that over half of the communities have 50 members or fewer. LCWR is experiencing diminishment just as congregations are. LCWR's focus is "What is ours to do? Who then shall we be as a conference?" There has been much discussion about collaborations with the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CSMWR) and the bishops. The United States is the only country that has three separate religious conferences. Other countries have one conference, where men and women are together. Perhaps the United States conferences need to begin collaborating.

The small number of LCWR staff does a great deal. It was questioned if that is sustainable. Additionally, there are regions where no one can or will be a regional leader. It was questioned if regions need to be reconfigured.

It was mentioned that LCWR often holds sessions that sisters who are not in leadership would benefit from attending. However, the bylaws state that it is for elected leadership only. There has been much back-and-forth conversation about this at the regional leaders' meeting.

LCWR received grant money and produced a graphic of five areas that LCWR will address:

1. Ongoing formation to facilitate congregations' viability for leadership
2. Develop affiliate relationships with organizations that resource religious life
3. Develop and disseminate content and processes for Transformative Justice
4. Create and implement processes needed to enliven the Inter-American Committee
5. Publish and disseminate the research, findings, and learnings of the LCWR efforts.

Copies of the graphic were available for the sisters to view at the resource table in the conference room.

Considering all that the LCWR staff is responsible for, it was questioned whether the *Occasional Papers* publication was necessary. The sisters in attendance discussed LCWR's offerings and the sense of overwhelm they have experienced due to the amount of information it shares. Perhaps other LCWR offerings could be reviewed to determine if they are necessary and could be reduced or discontinued. The HUBS were particularly appreciated as they allow communities to come together at a time that fits their calendars and to hear from sisters in different parts of the country. Perhaps this model is most beneficial, and only one meeting would need to be held locally.

There was then a significant discussion about regional configurations, collaboration possibilities, and how to give voice to mission and values in a safe manner.

SISTERS RISING WORLDWIDE (SRW) – SISTER IRENE O'NEIL, CSJ

- Website for Sisters Rising Worldwide: <https://srw.org/>
- Book Recommendation – “Reseeding Religious Life for Global Sisterhood,” edited by Susan Rose Francois, CSJP, and Juliet Mousseau, RSCJ.

At 3:00 p.m., Sister Irene O'Neil, CSJ, joined the meeting via Zoom to talk about Sisters Rising Worldwide. She shared her background in development for her religious community CSJ of St Paul and how she and others collaborated to identify the locations of sisters around the world, facilitating the movement of resources to them. There are two parts of the website associated with SRW's platform: a secure, private site for Sisters, called the Peace Room, and a public side for supporters and donors at SRW.org.

The Peace Room includes a database of members, allowing them to share resources and information, as well as articulate and foster collaboration among networks as they work to

address the root causes of systemic problems worldwide. Sisters seeking resources for their ministry can submit a resource request form, which, once accepted by SRW, allows them to share their needs with others via their public site.

The public site is a crowdsourcing platform that invites others to participate in the valuable work the sisters are doing by donating to specific programs, categorized by type (i.e., human trafficking, education) and geography. The objective of the site is to reach as many people as possible and move the sisters' work forward through their donations.

END OF DAY ON MONDAY, APRIL 28

Monday's session of the LCWR9 gathering ended at 4:00 p.m. with liturgy at 4:15 p.m., a social at 5:00 p.m., and dinner at 5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025

INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees passed the microphone to introduce themselves to the group.

PRAYER

At 9:00 a.m., the School Sisters of Notre Dame led the morning prayer with the reading of Isaiah 43:1,4, followed by the singing of "Holy Darkness" by Dan Schutte, which was shared via a slideshow. Mary Kay then read a poem by Joyce Rupp, followed by the gathering reading a prayer together.

UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA, SUPPORTING THE PATIENT, SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS, SELF-CARE – DAYNA LARSON HURST

Linda Szocik, SSJ-TOSF, Vice Chair of Region 9, introduced Dayna Larson Hurst and warmly welcomed her as the morning's presenter on "Understanding Dementia, Supporting the Patient, Supporting Caregivers, and Self-Care." Dayna greeted the sisters and expressed her appreciation for the way they shared their gifts in caring for others.

During her presentation, Dayna emphasized that stigma is a major contributor to the reduced quality of life, mental health challenges, and social isolation experienced by individuals living with dementia. She stressed the importance of addressing dementia openly to combat stigma and promote understanding.

Key points covered in the session included:

- Dementia is a terminal, progressive disease with no current cure. A visual comparison of a healthy brain and one with Alzheimer's highlighted the significant brain shrinkage (up to one-third loss in size).
- Dementia is an umbrella term encompassing several types, including Alzheimer's, Vascular Dementia, Lewy Body Dementia, and Frontotemporal Dementia. Dayna explained the distinct symptoms and characteristics associated with each type.

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- A review of brain anatomy and functions helped illustrate how dementia impacts different areas of the brain.
- Staff education is essential in providing effective and compassionate dementia care.

After a break at 10:20 a.m., Dayna introduced the Montessori method approach, “Know Me and Know My Story,” to engage meaningfully with individuals living with dementia through personal storytelling and relationship building. She also distributed a handout titled “How Might I Best Provide Support?”, offering practical guidance for caregivers and staff.

Dayna concluded by offering to share her PowerPoint presentation with attendees, requesting that it not be further distributed. The presentation concluded at Noon.

Linda thanked Dayna for her presence and for sharing her knowledge.

A break for lunch was taken at Noon. The meeting resumed at 1:30 p.m.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS TO BE SHARED WITH DAYNA HURST

- When should someone be invited to move, balancing agency and safety for the sister and the common good? (knowing there is no hard and fast rule for all)
- Some parameters that would be helpful: absolutes for safety issues, where the common good needs to outweigh the individual’s desires?
- Driving. Sisters with the beginnings of cognitive issues still pass their driving test. How do you handle that?
- Where do we begin? Who are the contact people? What paperwork needs to be filled out?
- How do we deal with a sister who has dementia issues in discernment?
- How do we work with the community or friends who protect the sister so she doesn’t have to go into a memory care facility?

The attendees expressed their gratitude to the executive board for inviting Dayna to speak, as she was very helpful.

NEXT MEETINGS

- Fall 2025 meeting is November 17–19, 2025, in Racine
Host: SSJ-TOSF
Prayer: FSPA
Speaker: TBD
- Spring 2026 meeting is April 20–22, 2026, in Oshkosh
Host: ANG
Prayer: SDS
Speaker: TBD

- Fall 2026 meeting is October 12–14, 2026, in Racine
Host: TBD
Prayer: SSJ-TOSF
Speaker: TBD
- Spring 2027 meeting is April 12–14, 2027, in Oshkosh
Host: TBD
Prayer: SCSC
Speaker: TBD
- Fall 2027 meeting is TBD, in Racine
Host: TBD
Prayer: Sinsinawa
Speaker: TBD

NATIONAL AGENDA

GLOBAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE (GCC)

Report to LCWR

Georgia Christensen, FSPA, shared that an annual report she is required to submit from the region to LCWR National is now due. Attendees were asked to reflect on the following questions for a few minutes at their tables and then share their responses with the group.

1. How have your efforts this year helped your region members recognize, share, and celebrate “Our time is Holy: Who then shall we be?”
2. How have the programs, speakers, actions, and meetings offered in your region helped LCWR members to become who they need to be for the world?
3. Is there something unique your region has done that other LCWR members would find beneficial?

Proposed Assembly Resolution, 2025–2029

Georgia shared the feedback from the Global Concerns Committee on the Proposed Assembly Resolution 2025–2029, as discussed during the fall regional meetings. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the changes and the statement as reviewed.

OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR 2026

Sylvia Anne led this session by reviewing the purpose of the Outstanding Leadership Award and the nomination process. A document containing the qualifications of four nominees — Mary Scullion, RSM; Kateri Mitchell, Sister of St. Anne; Mary Jean Kinny, BVM; and Addie Lorraine Walker, SSND — was shared. Time was then given for dialogue and discernment at the tables. After about 15 minutes, Sylvia Anne asked a listener or recorder from each table to share their table’s first, second, and third choices for nominees, along with some accompanying reasons. Mary Kabat, OSF, recorded these responses with the following order of nominees:

1. Addie Lorraine Walker, SSND

2. Mary Scullion, RSM
3. Kateri Mitchel, Sister of St. Anne

The group discussed the table process used to decide their nominees and why they added additional names. Additionally, they discussed what they knew of the three selected nominees.

Mary Kay will share Region 9's nominees with LCWR National. She will also send a message to the three who were affirmed by LCWR9 and the people whose names were mentioned but were not among the final three by stating something like, "In a conversation about those who provided leadership, our region talked about you and recognized you. We wanted you to know that, and thank you for your leadership."

A break was taken from 2:35 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

NOMINATIONS FOR LCWR ELECTIONS

The LCWR voting will begin in June. There are two nominees for president and nine for the national board.

CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS LIFE COMMITTEE

Members are encouraged to watch Module 3, which began on March 1 and will run through May. All sisters are welcome to join. The videos are available on the LCWR website under the "Resources" section.

The agenda for the day was completed, and attendees agreed to focus on some of the items on the next day's agenda in advance. The remaining agenda items were reviewed, including immigration, future LCWR9 topics, and potential regional restructuring. Also recommended was the structure of the LCWR9 meeting.

NATIONAL AGENDA UPDATE

LCWR National has announced that it will no longer include items on the regional meeting agenda. Information and sessions will be provided online, allowing leadership teams to interact and access information by signing up for various dates and times. This practice will start in the fall. This includes the Outstanding Leadership Award, the Global Concerns Committee, Nominations, and Contemporary Religious Life. The change will impact the amount of time needed for the Region 9 meeting.

STRUCTURE OF REGION 9 MEETING

Attendees voiced concern about shortening the Regional meeting times, as it will cut into the interactions and sharing of experiences. The additional time could allow for processing and group work after a presentation by an external speaker, such as Dayna Hurst. Leadership teams could also use the additional time to present what they are working on or struggling with. Subgroups could then be formed consisting of sisters who are dealing with similar things in their communities. It would be a deeper sharing.

The purpose of the festive meal was to engage with sisters of the community where the meeting was being held. That has lost its purpose. Perhaps that could be handled differently.

TOPICS AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The overall agreement of the attendees was to maintain the scheduled meeting dates and structure the agenda to create opportunities for conversation that deepen relationships and foster collaboration. This type of agenda structure could be implemented in the fall of 2025. Communities that would like to discuss particular subjects or have questions should share them with Mary Kay or the Executive Committee to plan and organize accordingly.

Linda explained her process in locating speakers for the fall 2025 meeting. She took the topics of interest shared by LCWR9 members from the prior meeting. She reached out to Sister Teresa Maya, CCVI, and Sister Maria Cimperman, RSCJ. They were both unavailable. There is currently no speaker arranged for the Fall meeting. A topic/speaker for Spring 2026 must also be determined.

The topic of human trafficking and immigration was a priority of LCWR9 members. Six LCWR9 congregations are represented on the Sisters South Advisory Board. The board reached out to their congregations, inviting the justice workers and communicators, as well as the chair of the LCWR legislative network. The goal of the meeting was to discuss how to respond responsibly in the legislative area. When around the table, it was recognized that they were all part of the legislative network. There is a corridor of human trafficking between Milwaukee and Chicago and beyond. A Corridor Committee has been established.

This group will attend the LCWR9 Fall meeting. They are just beginning to meet as a subcommittee. They will be given an entire day of the LCWR9 Fall 2025 meeting to discuss the important issues and how best to respond to justice issues at this time.

There is a need to come together to speak out in a manner that is best for women in religious life. Sharon Euart, RSM, JCD, and Chris Fusco, JCL, JD, Esq. of RCRI are resources for guidance. A suggestion was made that LCWR9 become educated about the possibilities before engaging in conversations. It was suggested that the legislative network group attend in the morning and that the RCRI canon/civil lawyer attend in the afternoon to assist with processing. If Chris Fusco could hear what Legislative Network has to say, he could then educate the entire group on ways to express the voice of women religious based on gospel values, rather than what is protested.

Region 9 Sign-on of Philadelphia Statement

LCWR9 has a voice beyond the individual communities. Perhaps a powerful statement from the Region 9 congregations could be made together. If a regional statement is made, the National LCWR must approve it, as most people won't be familiar with the distinction between regional and national levels.

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Stating things in a “we believe” context is powerful and is the viewpoint used by the Philadelphia communities. Linda read the Philadelphia article to the attendees. Those communities that signed on to the Philadelphia statement have made it available for all to use and share. Region 9 could sign on to the statement and share it in the local newspapers in their region. The news outlets in larger markets could be funded by Region 9, and the individual communities could cover the costs of the local, smaller ones. Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison, and La Crosse are larger markets.

The sisters discussed their communities' signing-on/sharing of the Philadelphia letter. It would be beneficial to time the publication around a national holiday, such as Memorial Day or Independence Day, which would allow for more time to explore communities' interest in signing-on and distributing it. The leadership teams must speak with their congregational members to see if they support it. If some are ready, before others, they could send it out earlier.

END OF DAY ON TUESDAY, APRIL 29

Tuesday's session of the LCWR9 gathering ended at 4:00 p.m. A social was held at 5:00 p.m., followed by a festive meal.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025

PRAYER

At 9:00 a.m., the School Sisters of Notre Dame led the morning prayer by singing “Beautiful is Your Love” by Josh Blakesley. A reflection and table sharing followed this: “From what we heard yesterday, what still clings to your mind, heart, and soul?” The sisters then joined in reading a prayer.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION – ADVERTISING OF THE PHILADELPHIA STATEMENT

As discussed on Tuesday, LCWR9 would like to allocate funds for advertising in major markets, including Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, and La Crosse. The following was discussed about sharing the statement:

- Allow the Executive Committee to research the cost and decide on the feasibility of publishing.
- Digital publications may be a good way to share the message.
- Ask communicators what is possible and what their recommendation would be for ad placement.
- Podcasts or other digital platforms may be considered and done throughout LCWR. Contract Amanda Gorman and others... to organize beyond the region and the newspapers.
- Perhaps Nones and Nuns would be a way to get the message out as well.

Communicators will be asked to research options, platforms, and other relevant information, perhaps by Memorial Day weekend and Fourth of July. The Fourth of July may be more manageable for larger communities. The Region 9 Executive Committee will communicate with the member communities after they have had an opportunity to consult with their communicators and will check their readiness.

ARCHBISHOP GROB – NEED FOR VICAR FOR THE DIOCESE

Archbishop Grob has expressed his preference for a female vicar, and anyone interested should contact him before he initiates a national search.

He would like to have meetings with religious communities. The Executive Committee will work with Archbishop Grob to schedule a time for him to attend an LCWR9 meeting. Perhaps Spring 2026 would be best.

Archbishop Grob is the head of the Province of Bishops in the state of Wisconsin. Archbishop Weakland used to convene that group periodically. Perhaps Archbishop Grob could be asked to convene a similar joint session of LCWR9 and the bishops to pave the way for those who do not live in the archdiocese, to foster additional conversations with their own bishops.

APPEAL FOR HELP – GOODNESS AND KINDNESS MOVEMENT

Sister Jean Schafer, SDS, explained the “Goodness and Kindness Movement” and shared a handout explaining the non-profit. It was presented to many groups, and there was interest, but no one joined them. The revelation of God’s goodness and kindness is a common charism. It should not be just Catholic, or sisters, or just Milwaukee. It needs to spread to relatives, friends, and colleagues. The elements of the “Goodness and Kindness Movement” are posted online on a [website](#), as well as on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Threads. Jean shared a video located on the Movement’s webpage explaining the elements of the Movement. There are no costs to join.

PRAYER FOR THOSE ATTENDING UISG IN ROME

The sisters gathered around those attending the UISG meeting in Rome to extend a prayer of blessing on their journey. Those traveling include Sisters Christina Heltsley, OP; Linda Szocik, SSJ-TOSF; Sue Ernster, FSPA; Joanne Schatzlein, OSF; Sharon Pollnow, CSA; and Theresa Sandok, OSM. Sister Deborah Fumagalli, OSF, is also traveling to Rome.

CLOSING RITUAL AND A BLESSING ON THE SDS LEADERSHIP TEAM

The team from the Sisters of the Divine Savior (Salvatorians), including Sisters Jean Schaefer, Mary Lee Grady, Mary Evelyn Zimbauer, and Sheila Novak, received a special blessing from the gathering, as this is their final LCWR9 meeting of their leadership term. The sisters then joined in the reading of “Litany of Being.”

FOLLOW UP – VOLUNTEER FOR LEGISLATIVE NETWORK LIAISON

Madeline Gianforte, CSA, volunteered to take over the LCWR9 liaison role for the Legislative Network.

HOUSEKEEPING

A sign-up sheet for leading prayers and organizing the socials for future meetings was available for congregations to volunteer.

Socials will continue to be held in the evenings at future meetings; the heavier but simple dinner meal will be in the evenings. A lunch meal will not be served.

THANK YOU 'S

Mary Kay thanked the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi (Lake-OSF) for hosting the meeting and the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) for being prayer leaders. Mary Kay expressed her thanks to the Region 9 Executive Committee, Linda, Sylvia Anne, Mary, and Georgia, for their organization and work. The attendees also expressed their gratitude to Mary Kay for facilitating the meeting and to the Executive Committee for their efforts in organizing the event. Dena Rose Kryzanowski, Executive Assistant to CSA, was thanked for serving as the meeting's recording secretary.

ADJOURNMENT

The LCWR Region 9 spring meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 30, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Dena Rose Kryzanowski

Recording Secretary