

LCWR REGION 9 FALL MEETING MINUTES
IN-PERSON, SIENA RETREAT CENTER, RACINE, WI
November 17-19, 2025

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2025

WELCOME

At 1:00 p.m., the Siena Retreat Center Executive Director, Claire Anderson, joined the LCWR9 members in the Oak Room to warmly welcome the sisters and shared details about the Center and its amenities.

INTRODUCTIONS

Mary Kay welcomed the sisters to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to Diana DeBruin, OSF, who was recently named Vicar for Religious for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and to Pat Cormack, SCSC, who serves as Vicar for Religious for the Diocese of Superior. Deb Sciano, SSND, was also recognized as the President-elect of LCWR.

The sisters were asked at their tables to share how they came to the meeting today by responding to the questions, “What has touched their heart, and what do they hold in prayer?”

The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis (SSJ-TOSF) hosted the meeting, and the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) served as prayer leaders.

MONDAY OPENING PRAYER

Sister Julie Tydrich of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) led the opening prayer, themed “Hope.” She read the prayer adapted from an original prayer written by Kathy Robert, FSPA. A video followed this, “[Do Not Fear to Hope](#)” by Rory Cooney. The sisters then reflected during a few silent moments. Prayer concluded with all the sisters again reading the prayer as one voice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mary Kay asked how many sisters were able to hear the national office share their information online. Members expressed appreciation for this format and said it was valuable to have the national agenda available online rather than presented at the regional meeting.

There will not be an Outstanding Leadership Award next year, as it is the 70th anniversary. There will be a different format for the national meeting in August to include all religious, celebrating the life. A video will be released soon from the LCWR President’s office sharing additional details about the anniversary. Additionally, potential names for board membership and service opportunities across LCWR are being discussed.

A sister shared a request for prayers for Jamie Phelps, OP.

HOUSEKEEPING

Congregations were to complete the Region 9 membership document and submit it to Mary Kabat. Additionally, a sign-up sheet for leading prayers and organizing socials for future LCWR9 meetings was available for congregations to volunteer.

MAKING HISTORY: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A HISTORIC WIN FOR LAND JUSTICE

At 2:00 p.m., the sisters shared in the viewing of a live event by [Land Justice Futures](#) titled “Making History,” where they heard from sisters and Lac du Flambeau tribal members about the historic moment on October 31, 2025, when the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) returned Marywood Retreat Center in Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin, to the Lac du Flambeau band of the Lake Superior Chippewa. This is the first known Catholic land return to a Tribal Nation as an act of repair for colonization and residential boarding schools, and the first rematriation done by women religious. FSPA LCWR9 members who were part of the webinar included Sisters Sue Ernster (current President) and Eileen McKenzie (currently living and working at the U.S.-Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona). Additional information regarding the return of the land can be found on the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration’s [website](#). Webinar attendees were invited to learn more by reading and viewing the information on the Land Justice Futures website. The webinar ended at 3:30 p.m.

The sisters took a 20-minute break.

RESPONSE TO LAND JUSTICE FUTURES

Members shared their reflections on the Land Justice Futures presentation:

- A person contacted CSA to thank the sisters for giving their land, but he had the wrong community. He praised all that the FSPAs had done.
- Every one of the congregations sits on property that was likely inhabited by so many different tribes. The history of the land should be researched to be conscious of the past, even if nothing can be done now.
- The focus should be on the tribe, not on the congregation. The tribe was historically marginalized and had no reason to come in good faith and talk with the community. Their courage is an inspiration.
- It may be time to schedule another presentation on tribal history in WI, as was done in the past for LCWR9.
- The healing that seemed to take place for both the tribe and the congregation was touching and gave a profound sense of the divine being in the process.
- Gets to the greater thing of getting to know your neighbor and sitting down and finding commonalities.
- Kristin Thome, OP, is very knowledgeable on the “Doctrine of Discovery” and could be a valuable resource.
- It is ironic that the airing of the docuseries on “The American Revolution” by Ken Burns is airing as we hear about and discuss the rematriation land.

- There are opportunities to do things differently. The work of Land Justice Futures is phenomenal.

SYNODAL PROCESS: A VISION FOR A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE

Linda Szocik, SSJ-TOSF, introduced the afternoon's process, which used contemplative space and synodality, similar to "Conversations of the Spirit" used at the UISG in May. She introduced the question for table discussion: *Desiring a Future Full of Hope*, what are your greatest fears/concerns personally and for your sisters and congregation?

One sister at each of the nine tables served as the starter and timer. The sisters had time to reflect deeply on the question personally. They then engaged in table conversations using a 3-part process: 1. Deep listening, with each having two minutes per sister to share, pausing briefly between each sharing. 2. Sharing what was heard during the two minutes. 3. A general sharing with crosstalk and identification of what is surfacing that you would want to bring to the whole group to hear?

MONDAY GROUP SHARING:

The table groups shared the following:

- There is tension in the multitude of responsibilities internally within the congregation and the awareness of what the world may be calling forth from us at this time.
- We recognized the tension of living amid so much change—letting go of what's dying in our communities while still holding hope for the future God will reveal. We can't control or define that future, so we pray: "God, help us. We don't know what it will look like. Help us do whatever we must to let You be God."
- We reflected on death and the unique way we each view our own. Looking at our congregations, we asked what we hope to pass on from our charisms. We emphasized the importance of relationships—healing, building, and sustaining them. Our sisters trust us as leaders, confident that we know what we're doing, and that trust is a meaningful gift.
- We found a lot of common ground. 1. We're overwhelmed by the sheer amount of loss we're experiencing and need to name and share our grief. 2. We each view leadership differently, but agree we need inspiring leaders—and wonder whether we have them. 3. We want to speak boldly for justice, without being constrained even by canon law.
- We haven't lost sight of the call of religious life, and we have the hope of all the generations leading us forward.
- We reflected on the moral voice of religious life amid troubling national events, and the discouragement many feel. We noted limits in multicultural efforts and the loss of intergenerational collaboration. Our sisters carry real fears—such as concerns about Medicaid and Medicare—which adds pressure on leadership to offer balance, hope, and support for quality living. Even LCWR is helping leadership teams manage

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growing stress. We need balance, the help of lay experts, and a future approached with hope, trust, and Divine providence.

- We need to learn how to care for one another as a group. Together, we hold real power, and by listening not only to our own congregations but also to others, we can offer collective support so that no community loses hope.
- We worry about whether our delegates—and even our elected leaders—have the capacity for all we’re asking of them. With so much energy devoted to elder care, we wonder how to also invest in those with energy for the new, giving more attention to our younger members.
- We’re concerned about our sisters’ health and helping them feel valued. We want to shift the image of religious life from “aging and shelved” to “wise women with a vision for the future,” and find ways to express and share that message.

The session on Monday afternoon ended at 5:00 p.m., followed by a social. Dinner was served at 5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025

At 9:00 a.m., the sisters congregated in the Siena Center Oak Room to begin the day’s session. Members of the Legislative Network Justice Promoters (LegNet) joined them and began with a skit.

PRAYER

The members of the Legislative Network Panel led the sisters in prayer by reading Psalm 79 from *Psalms for Praying*, by Nan C. Merrill.

LEGISLATIVE NETWORK PANEL

“Signs of the Times: Living the Gospel in this Seismic Shift” was presented by members of a Legislative Network Panel included the following Justice Promoters: Tim Hall, Racine Dominicans; Sister Reg McKillip, Sinsinawa Dominicans; Tracy Abler, Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes; Florence Deacon, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi; Lisa Demler, School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Florence described white Christian nationalism—an imposter form of Christianity that claims the U.S. is, and should remain, a Christian nation rooted in a fixed social order. She traced its origins to the country’s founding and highlighted how demographic shifts have fueled its growth. She noted that the U.S. is now in a period of breakdown, ferment, and reinvention.

Tim explained the nature and style of the current United States presidency and gave examples from history of previous instances when the nation has witnessed it. He explained Project 2025, its goals, and the need to transcend partisan politics to overcome.

Catholic sisters have a unique role in American society, inspiring, guiding, and informing consciences, and they need to do what they have always done. Congregations should

continue to leverage their strengths. All are entitled to their feelings, as there are reasons for grief and lament, but they should move forward without fear.

Tracy presented on “How are congregations responding to/engaging with our current realities?” Most congregations report being very engaged in advocacy by letter writing and lobby visits to members of Congress. Others participate in rallies and demonstrations. Several invest in billboard messaging. Movie nights feature films to educate, create dialogue, and include a call to action. The consistent thing is that people across the country respect the moral voice of women religious.

LCWR issued Guidance for Communicators that included:

- Establish a foundational statement of principles
- Discern responses in light of local realities
- Ground communications in charism, mission, and scripture

Nonviolent actions that can be taken:

- Block – stand up and stop abuses and harm (street protests, demonstrations, boycotts, letters, phone calls, strikes, civil disobedience)
- Bridge – deepen understanding, find common solutions (contact and support your legislators that are doing the right thing; Counter misinformation with letters to the editor, conversations, social media posts, etc.)
- BUILD – create the just and equitable future that is desired

Examples of where civil dialogue is occurring include [Faith in Action](#), [Braver Angels](#), [Listening from the Heart](#), and [CSA's Conversations of the Heart](#).

The Clinton Franciscans are closing their Peace Center next year. There is a proposal to create a Regional Justice Center in Clinton, IA, that would support congregations in six states: Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and Michigan. It would be a resource for congregations with and without justice promoters. One focus is to develop lay leadership in justice work to continue the justice ministries of Catholic sisters into the future.

S. Reg McKillip stated that in 2026, there are opportunities for Catholic sisters:

❖ *The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence*

With the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, there is an opportunity to reaffirm democratic values constructively during a time of deep political division, without partisanship. Several suggested actions were shared: storytelling projects, art/essay contests, Facebook and Instagram messages, gifts of grants and donations to various underrepresented groups, dialogues within the religious community and the public, a joint statement from Region 9, 250 Acts of Mercy, an anniversary prayer that could be said together that speaks to the importance of freedom and justice.

❖ *Midterm Elections*

Midterm elections are very important, highly unpredictable, and potentially historic. WI is ranked as the 5th hardest state to vote in, and the reasons were explained. Congregations can act by informing people about the voting process, having conversations about the issues, hosting a candidate forum, hosting a community conversation on a ballot measure, and reminding their employees to vote.

TABLE CONVERSATION

The Legislative Network panel asked the sisters to have conversations at their tables for 20 minutes about two questions, and they were then asked to share with the group:

1. How does what we have heard today affect what we decide to do going forward?
 2. What concerns or responsibilities weigh on you as a member of a Leadership Team as you make decisions about our public response?
- A two-pager from the present materials from Florence and Tim would be helpful. Perhaps include Reg's practical suggestions for 2026, weaving Catholic Social Teaching and guidance to help voters.
 - Refer to archives to show what has been done historically – what are examples of actions?
 - There is concern for congregations that don't have justice promoters.
 - Maybe it is time for a joint statement from LCWR9. Use a subcommittee of communicators, justice workers, and sisters. Use social justice teachings and share it with the other communities to be released in 2026 as the 250th anniversary to be an inspiration and challenge to Wisconsin residents. Put in newspapers.
 - What if Justice promoters wrote a grant to the Conrad Hilton fund to write on Catholic Social Values and publish on various dates to share influence.
 - \$6K was given for 3-5 years. Things were put on billboards and buses to support anti-trafficking efforts. Now, do it on immigration rites. That was effective. It was in Green Bay, La Crosse, Milwaukee, and FdL... that may be more effective than having us at a rally every so often.
 - FSPAs host a Zoom call every second Tuesday of the month with someone from Network to get updates on legislation and what actions can be taken. If a community doesn't have a social justice promoter, they are welcome to join the Zoom.
 - The presentation on the complexity of voting was informative. A simple infographic of the steps one would have to take to become a voter would be extremely helpful and could be shared.
 - Regarding possible funding, SSM Health has a fund where they haven't used all their money and may be a resource, especially if speaking up for healthcare for everyone.
 - Congregation communicators are vital to justice promoters.
 - Poll worker training is available and has a good set of materials about voter registration. Those resources may be sufficient in assisting voters.

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- Possibilities for early voting and available hours need to be communicated.
- We need to do something together as Region 9, perhaps commissioning the day's panel to do something specific.
- "You people could go on the road." Suggest they get in seminaries and give the same presentation. Our parishes need to hear this from the pulpit. Help them understand Catholic Social Teaching.
- I have had co-poll workers express hesitancy to work in the future out of fear. The presence of sisters could help to make a difference. You don't have to work in the voting district where you live.
- With respect to voter registration, if people are green card holders, they're lawful permanent residents. They must be careful when encouraging people to vote, ensuring they complete naturalization first.
- Perhaps a webinar by this panel could be given so each community could have its own conversations.

LCWR9 members were thanked for their input. The Legislative Network meets in a couple of weeks, and they will share the ideas offered. The panel was grateful and flattered by the opportunity to be present. They feel supported by the leadership teams. They recognize the difficulty that leadership teams have in discerning what to engage in through the justice promoters in the given political landscape.

Going into the next year, everyone looks forward to collaborative actions by Region 9 and the individual leadership teams to use their voices more strategically, not out of fear but out of trust. It has been the history of women religious to work for the common good. Everything that has been worked for is being picked away (the various ministries). Not using the voice of women religious is not an option.

The morning session ended at 11:45 a.m. with lunch being served in the Siena Dining Room. The afternoon session resumed at 1:30 p.m.

SYNODAL PROCESS: A VISION FOR A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE

Linda Szocik explained that LCWR9 members need to begin discerning the future of the membership and the format of future meetings. To prepare for this topic, which was to be discussed in more detail on Wednesday morning, she introduced the question, "What is your *Vision of Hope* moving forward?" She asked the sisters to use the same synodal process used on Monday afternoon for their table sharing.

TUESDAY GROUP SHARING

- All of us have hope for the future of religious life in our own communities and believe continued support for one another is important. Collaborate, not duplicate services. More time at meetings to get to know each other. Hope we will take action on what we heard today. Leave as LCWR9 and individual communities a legacy that empowers women.

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- Vision of hope is the outward sign of togetherness and collaboration. That solidarity is a powerful tool that can be witnessed outside this building. Be there for each other as we walk our talk.
- We would like to see, as we leave on the final day, that we have made a commitment to do and be something together.
- It is important for us to get together twice a year. Would people come if we didn't have an agenda? There is power in our relationships and coming together so we can support each other.
- Dream of a global sisterhood where we will reach a point where we are all in this together. We talked about coming to the cliff and not falling off, but soaring off the edge. If we have sisters with a passion for a certain ministry or presence, it doesn't matter what community they belong to.
- Do things together so it is "the sisters," not necessarily a certain congregation. Acting out of our values and the Gospel, so when we make statements, that is where we are coming from, and people know we are the people of God.
- We hope that we would see everything we do, even our aging, as mission. Examples: several communities are still open to vocation/formation work as a way of gifting to the future or respecting our way of life. Doing justice work as we are able. Everything we do is mission, even selling buildings and right-sizing, or self-care.
- Networking and collaboration with LCWR9, whether having fun together or doing what we proposed this morning, committing to something to collaborate on together. Collaborating with other groups so we can be a witness.
- We had a conversation about our faith life and what holds us together, and what is important to us. We got to know each other in a precious way.
- We meet twice a year, and maybe it would be good to have a Zoom gathering in between to check in with each other, something light.
- Dominican Sisters conference puts out a monthly publication, *In Memoriam*, with bios of sisters who have died. We could do that for each other to create a sense of solidarity and compassion when you see that a congregation has had significant losses. Don't need to write a letter or sympathy card, but just to be aware of each other.
- We need to pass along the legacy, hand on the charism, and empower others to plant the seeds, encourage them to grow.
- How to deal with conflict within the community of being on both sides, respecting opinions, but not letting one overpower the other.
- Respect what people can do in justice work.
- Women religious - building the bridges to bring reality in justice to the world.
- Do something with the young sisters – get them together somehow to articulate common understandings of vows and the needs of the world... justice issues, to address them together.

A 20-minute break was taken at 2:40 p.m.

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CONSENT AGENDA

The minutes from the Spring 2025 LCWR9 meeting held on April 28–30, 2025, at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Oshkosh, WI, were inadvertently not posted to the website for member review. At the Spring 2026 meeting, the minutes from this meeting and the Spring 2025 meeting will be presented for review and approval on the consent agenda.

Mary Kay presented the remaining items on the consent agenda, including the financial report dated August 31, 2025, and the WRC update. Both items were approved as presented.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS MEETING

Mary Kay asked the tables to have conversations and share on paper, “What concrete commitments or actions can we make as LCWR9 or as individual congregations?” These written table responses were given to the executive committee for review and were to be shared with the attendees on Wednesday morning.

TOPICS FOR THE SPRING 2026 LCWR9 MEETING

Mary Kay then asked the tables to discuss, for 10 minutes, which topics they would be interested in for the Spring 2026 LCWR9 meeting.

The following were shared:

- Something on the use of AI, the pros and cons for leadership, and how we can protect our sisters from using it
- Self-care as leaders, a discussion about self-care, and perhaps on the afternoon of Tuesday, practice some of that. How do we deal with the reality and the stresses that leaders experience?
- Suggest Pam Orbach, the founder of A Center for Restorative Solutions in Seattle, could be asked to do some non-violent communication education, for instance, the use of [GROK Conversation Cards & Empathy games](#).
- Do some fun things to break up meeting time to add levity and movement.
- Have presenters come from the [Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom](#), a Muslim Jewish community.
- Have a check-in from each congregation, sharing what is life-giving/positive, and also what they are struggling with as a way to support each other.
- Have someone look at the implications of “Trump’s Big Bill.”
- Look at the configuration/format of the meetings.
- Have someone share the in-depth history of native Americans in Wisconsin, in different parts of the state.
- Have the League of Women Voters attend a meeting and perhaps record it for use in the individual communities, on their history, and how to encourage others to vote.
- Immigration – an immigration lawyer or a motivational speaker who can explain the immigration process.

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- Have a speaker or something on justice for an external focus. Have someone with an internal focus, such as transitioning to laypeople for Chief Administrators/Officers and other forms of lay help, to continue the mission and vision.

TUESDAY CLOSING PRAYER

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) led the closing prayer, which included the reading of the reflection, “Hope is the Yeast,” adapted from *Reseeding Religious Life Through Global Sisterhood*, p. 26. A short video about Hope was then shared. Sisters were then invited to share a word of Hope or a phrase from the reflection or video with their table members.

The session on Tuesday afternoon ended slightly early, and a social was enjoyed at 4:10 p.m. Dinner was served at 5:30 p.m. in the Siena Dining Room.

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WEDNESDAY OPENING PRAYER

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) led a “[Prayer for Inspiration](#)” adapted from Marybeth Heiler. The sisters then silently reflected on the prayer before sharing the closing reading.

WHAT CAN LCWR9 COMMIT TO BEFORE WE LEAVE

Mary Kay welcomed everyone to the morning’s session. She then shared the compilation of input received during the previous day’s session on action items for LCWR9. The document was titled, “What can LCWR Region 9 commit to before we leave?” The tables were asked to share their two preferred action items, with prayer as the primary focus, and the 250 Acts of Mercy also being popular. As a region, LCWR9 will commit to two of the initiatives.

Mary Kay will send additional details about what the tables submitted. Individual congregations could commit to additional initiatives and share what they are doing beyond the two with LCWR9 members. Mary Kay will work with Mary Kabat to ensure it is shared on the WRC website to spark ideas for each other.

It was also noted that a series of webinars on voter registration could be offered, possibly including the Legislative Network’s panel presentation. LCWR9 has a private YouTube channel linked to the website, and the Zoom recordings could be shared there.

The discussion was tabled to be continued after the discussion of the Regional Justice Center Proposal.

DISCUSSION OF THE REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER PROPOSAL

Laura Nettles, FSPA, was part of the planning of the Proposal. Each congregation should have access to a copy of the Proposal, and she will share it with Mary Kabat for distribution to LCWR9 members.

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Laura explained the concept of the Proposal and the history of the Clinton Franciscans Peace Center. The Clintons are coming to completion and can't support such a center. They suggest that congregations contribute financially to the Center to ensure access for all. It doesn't replace the justice coordinator but will enhance their work. If a congregation does not have a justice coordinator, the center could serve the community. It would be a conceptual center, not a physical brick-and-mortar.

The proposal is an initial draft, and the authors would like feedback and the opportunity to answer questions that the communities may have. Jennifer from Clinton is collecting and coordinating the responses to the proposal.

A 10-minute break was taken at 9:50 a.m.

WHAT CAN LCWR9 COMMIT TO BEFORE WE LEAVE (CONTINUED)

The members resumed their conversation about commitments to be made from this gathering. There was a recommendation of three focuses:

1. A common prayer to be written and used however each congregations wish.
2. 250 Acts of Mercy – each congregation participates in some way
3. LegNet – collaborate on Catholic Social Teaching (CST), voting materials, and a joint statement

The membership has committed to the first two focuses.

The Sinsinawa Dominicans will draft a common prayer and will share it with the group. It is to be all-inclusive, not just from LCWR9.

Each congregation will complete 250 Acts of Mercy in its own way. For example, each sister could do a certain number of acts, and they can be published on individual websites/social media. Each congregation will do what they can, invite others to participate, and publish about it as they choose. Each community can share that it is participating as a member of LCWR9.

LCWR9 will commit to working with the justice promoters and communicators to collaborate on CST, voting materials, and a joint statement. The statement is to be produced for distribution closer to the 250th anniversary. There is an LCWR9 gathering in the spring, which will allow for more member dialogue.

The promoters are to create a statement and work with communicators on how to share it. Concerns that congregations have should be shared with them to establish boundaries. There are two LCWR9 members designated as links to the justice promoters. They can be the clarifiers. After the statement is created, each congregation would share it as they wish/are able.

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FUTURE TOPICS AND INITIAL CONVERSATION ON FUTURE REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Regional leadership discussion will be postponed until the next meeting's agenda.

REFLECTION ON OUR DAYS TOGETHER

A suggestion was made for next time, have more introductions of the members at the beginning of the meeting.

THANK YOU

Mary Kay thanked Dena Rose Kryzanowski, Executive Assistant for CSA, for serving as the meeting's recording secretary; the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis (SSJ-TOSF) for hosting the meeting; and the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) for serving as prayer leaders. The Executive Committee was thanked for their work in planning the event.

FUTURE LCWR REGION 9 MEETING DATES

- Spring 2026 meeting is April 20–22, 2026, in Oshkosh
Host: ANG
Prayer:
Speaker: TBD
- Fall 2026 meeting is October 12–14, 2026, in Racine
Host: TBD
Prayer: SSJ-TOSF
Speaker: TBD

WEDNESDAY CLOSING PRAYER

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) led the closing prayer, which included a reading of "Pope Francis' Mission Prayer (adapted) and a video "[I've Got Hope](#)" by Gen Vede.

ADJOURNMENT

The LCWR Region 9 Fall meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dena Rose Kryzanowski
Recording Secretary