**Introduction of first speaker:** Sr. Jayne Helmlinger who is the current president of LCWR. Jane is the General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange in California. She began her second term of office in August 2016. She has 25 years of experience as a healthcare executive serving on the board of trustees within the St. Joseph Health at both the local and systemic levels. Prior to her current role as General Leader, Sr Jane was the executive vice-president of Mission Integration for the St. Joseph Health in Orange, California. So, in this role she insured that the grounding principals and theological underpinnings of Catholic healthcare extended throughout the system.

**Sr. Jayne Helmlinger:** Thank you, Sr. Pat and for the beautiful prayer Yolanda, that we started this time together. It is a pleasure and an honor for LCWR to be a part of this conversation with all of you from around different parts of the world. It is for us, part of what I’ll speak to at the moment, our global lens that we want to live and lead by. And so to have all of you with us, to have this conversation is a real gift to us. So, thank you for tuning in.

I wanted to start and I want to speak from my heart and from my experience as a leader in the midst of this pandemic that is creating such suffering and havoc across our world. I want to start there and then I want to move into what we call the emerging orientations and speak of our own strategic thinking and planning as a conference.

So, first on COVID-19, where I’m located here in Orange, California, it’s beautiful, our grounds are beautiful. As COVID-19 took hold, there is a lot of traffic around where I live and it is quiet now. It can hear the parrots that fly around our grounds and the other birds. I can hear our water fountain. It is just a cascade of water that is beautiful and I am hearing more and more the sirens going into St. Joseph Hospital, which is ten yards from our Motherhouse. I can hear the helicopters landing at Children’s Hospital of Orange County. Those sounds and the juxtaposition between experiencing the beauty of nature as I walk and look at the beautiful gardens with what I know is happening just a few yards away from me in the ICU and the emergency room can be devastating, to be in that and to hear it, and to want to be there. To be a healing presence for those who are so frightened and scared. And I can’t be. But we are finding ways to reach out and to contribute, even from our care facilities and from sisters living across California. Finding our ways to contribute and to reach out to people, especially on the spiritual and psychological level during this time.

LCWR is doing the same. Our National Office ministers, and Carol’s on the call and I’m sure will speak to this, and is wonderful accepting calls from our members for assistance, for guidance. To access resources for their own members on how to process what is happening around our world and the devastation that is happening.

For me, at the core of it is, when one part of the Body of Christ suffers, we all suffer. That is such a tenant of our faith and it is certainly coming home in a very strong and painful way now.

So, for all of you across the world and especially for those congregations who are really getting hit hard be this virus, we your fellow sisters are with you. We are with you in prayer. We are trying to gather resources to assist you. You are not alone and we are journeying with you, because this is a global sisterhood. We are in this together. You are our sisters.

I will speak in a moment to our five emerging orientations. We are global, we have porous boundaries. Our lives are touched by what you are experiencing in your congregations and care facilities. The image of Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square stays with me and his words that this brings us all onto the same boat really touches a rawness of the breathe and depth in me. We are in this together and it’s trying to grasp the breath and the depth of the unity found in this collective suffering and the rising, that whole Paschal mystery that is happening at the same time. That is what we are going to have to keep processing as women religious, as we lead our congregations, as we lead in our conferences, to continue to delve deeper into what is the meaning of this for us, spiritually, theologically and practically, as we move forward.

One of the imagines or words that I attach to how I lead right now is with holy disquietude. What holy disquietude means to me is that I’m very unsettled like I’ve never been before in leadership. And I want to be unsettled. I don’t want to numb myself against what is happening around the world and in all the countries around the world because from that suffering and that pain, I think a deep, next movement of religious life will emerge.

We are strong in our faith that does not waiver. For myself, I’m hope-filled, yes I hold a tension and an anxiety but it does not limit, it actually gives energy to that forward look of – so, what are we being called to in this moment in time. Where aught our resources be? Where aught our prayers be, our presence? I think the collective conversation of that, with all of us literally around the world will be important for religious life in what we have committed ourselves to. We are in this together. So, how do we want to be in it as we slowly emerge, as different, as quarantines get lifted? And are we ready if there is a second and third wave? We need to be ready. Because we need to provide that spiritual guidance. We need to provide that clear thinking and yes, we are going to feel the pain that is happening. We need to be looking ahead and helping one another to continue on that journey and not get stuck.

So, for me when I think about that, what helps me is when I think back in the United States and across the world in 1918 to 1920 with the great flu epidemic, for many congregations in the U. S. that is when we got into the ministry of healthcare. Certainly, it’s my passion. I was never on the clinical side, I was always on the administrative side, the sponsorship side, and yet for me, when I think about that it was a need, it was a call and we responded. Often we responded, ourselves with our own congregations. I think the difference in 2020 is that we aught not respond as individual congregations. I hope we respond collectively. We continue to figure out where is that shared space we can have that will help us, that will help us move forward in the

future in a way that our collective wisdom, our collective thinking, our collective experiences will inform our next steps. We don’t go blindly into the future. We are in this together and we’ve got to think together, to pray together and discern together and help each other in a way that we’ve not been called to before. This, to me, has heightened the necessity of our need to continue partnerships and interactions in a much more focused and global way than we’ve had before. Certainly as LCWR, as an organization, it’s so much a part of what we talk about and I will shift to that for a moment.

During the last two years we’ve had what we’ve called the Emerging Orientations and there are five. There is our global sisterhood. These are the lens through which we look and from which we lead today. We stand in these orientations and they help guide us as leaders. So, the global perspective, it’s a global sisterhood, it’s a global brotherhood, it’s a global humanity. It is part and parcel of who we are. So, we need to keep that always in our mind.

And that leads to porous boundaries. What do we not need to set up as boundaries, that maybe are there and we don’t even realizing, and that’s both internal and external? What are the boundaries in our hearts that keep us from connecting with others in ways that would be best for the dear neighbor without distinction? What is that that we need to do?

The third one is integrative partnerships for religious life and mission. As you heard Sr. Pat, as she was introducing us, talk about the enhancement of the relationships that UISG is getting with other conferences around the world, including LCWR. Those are things we want to do, both within the United States and beyond, is to continue to build those relationships and connections with other conferences and other organizations that support religious life. I think the time and the need is right before our eyes. We need to act on it and continue to evolve those relationships in ways we haven’t thought of before because the need wasn’t there. The need is there now.

Our fourth orientation is the mission focus in the public square. What we mean by that is, where is the LCWR voice and presence most needed? Certainly, you are aware of the political environment in the United States. The justice issues that we speak so strongly to in terms of migration, immigration, climate change. The justice issues that are the heart and soul, the poverty, the economic poverty of what is happening and with COVID-19 when I think of the United States and I look at what’s happening across our states. The many small businesses that are going under. These are generational mom and pop businesses. Some of the farmers, the smaller farmers, they are not going to survive this and yet they are the backbone of many of our communities. So, when I play that out within the United States and across the globe it’s going to be catastrophic economically for so many countries, for so many people, villages, persons. Both within the United States and way beyond the United States.

So, for me, where is our voice needed as we move forward and think about the socio-economic level as well as the spiritual, psychological level of the fallout of this pandemic, the PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome) that is already impacting our care givers, first responders, those who are essential workers. All those folks are in harm’s way right now. That’s going to have repercussions and that will be for generations, when you think of the family implications. So, when I look at our call as women religious, what is ours to do? It tells me to think broadly and focus in the public square. Where do we need to be? Where does our voice need to be heard? Most especially and to discern that together and have a much stronger collective voice as women religious, so that our message, our heart and soul is out there in the media and in the social platforms and in the forums we need to be in to influence and to be influenced.

And our fifth orientation is in being technologically astute. Well good grief, look at this! We actually kind of wrestled with that fifth orientation as a conference. Does it belong there? Does it not? And it’s very clear that we need to be technologically astute. We were thinking more in terms of, how do we connect with younger generations. How do we bridge that gap between our elders and those that are newer members in congregations and across the globe? How do we do that networking? So the technologically astute now takes on a whole new meaning, with me as well, when I think about how do we continue to connect like we are right now and to continue these conversations via the media platforms that are available to us and that can connect us, sister to sister, brother to brother, sister and brother together.

Those five orientations of the global lens, LCWR’s porous boundaries, continue to break down those barriers that need not exist, the integrative partnerships with other people and conferences, the mission focus, where does our voice need to be heard in this world, especially post-pandemic as we emerge from this and ready ourselves for a possible second, third wave and to continue to develop our technological abilities to move forward.

One of the things, as I think about this pandemic, and I have been using, actually, these orientations with my own community and saying how they are impacting us. How I’m thinking about them as a congregation but also within LCWR. One of the things that caught my attention was on a 60 Minutes episode a couple of weeks ago and they were showing, I forget which automobile company, Ford, GM, one of those, and they showed how one of the factories that usually create the computer boards that go into cars and trucks. Within three to four weeks they were able to transfer that factory from making computer boards for cars and trucks to making ventilators to save people’s lives. If the automobile industry can do that in a month and change the production to something life-giving as ventilators that we’re in desperate need in our country and across the world; what are we being called to as women religious? What major shift are we being called to at this moment in time? Whether it’s in ministry or focus, what is that, what is the challenge for us? Where do we need to pivot? Right now, in the midst of this pandemic and where might we pivot as we emerge from this?

We talk about being called to the margins. What are those margins now that have shifted with this pandemic? What are the margins that we still have for LCWR as we develop those five orientations to look out on our world, to lead from those places of strength and vulnerability? All of us are vulnerable. There is not one person in this world is not vulnerable in this pandemic. From vulnerability comes strength. I think we’re called to that. I think we are called to something more. We talk about the “more” as Sisters of St. Joseph. The more is right there in front of us. How are we being stretched and how well will we respond? I hope we don’t, in a slang kind of term that we use here in the United States, circle the wagons and think only of ourselves. We cannot do that. That image of Pope Francis spoke so beautifully about, that’s the image I want, that unity of humankind including earth, the cosmos. We are one. So how do we respond as one? Not simply as our own congregational needs. I think the needs of our world, the people and where is God calling us forth. We have to listen to the Spirit and continue these social media platforms or the media we are using today to continue to connect and really discern together where are we being called. Yes, you’ll probably act locally, but how do we do this collectively, as a voice of women of faith, women of joy, in the midst of even of a pandemic. Women who are in love with their God and our members are right there with us. We all want to continue to contribute, no matter what age you are along the continuum. There are things that are needed from every person, every sister across the globe. And why not do this together! And continue this rhythm of inter-conference conversations as well as our own conference conversations, member congregation conversations and keep that rhythm and that dance going because there the Spirit is working. That’s where we’ll discern where our next edge, where that next margin we are being called to is. That’s my hope. It’s my great desire. I feel the passion of our sisters who have gone before us, their bold faith, their fore-sight and their flexibility. We have that too! This is our moment to continue to build on those legacies and just unfurl the creativity and the passion we have, but do it collectively and with a lot of focus.

Transcription by: Margaret Magee OSF

May 17, 2020

**The questions are based on Jayne Helmlinger's presentation...**

In light of our Chapter theme and our Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality focused areas for Chapter,

1 (a) What awakens within me about the effect of COVID-19 Pandemic?

(b) And, how is God speaking to me, and perhaps the Congregation, about a response to the Pandemic?

2 (a) What are some learnings or orientations emerging as a result of the Pandemic and the way forward?

(b) Is there a major shift of any kind?