Our Foundress, Saint Mary Euphrasia wrote,
“Correct with kindness and love but also with zeal and hold freedom. If you do not speak out, if you do not sound the alarm when it is needed you will be justly convicted by your silence”

“We raise our voices in outrage and sorrow over the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. We are sounding the alarm and we will not rest until the impact of white supremacy, racism, hatred and indifference is acknowledged and extinguished.

We pray for the family of George Floyd and for everyone struggling with his senseless death, especially those living in communities of color who also live in fear. And we pray for the police officers who must live with the results of their actions.

Let us raise the consciousness of all people and give voice to the searing pain of racial inequality and disdain. Let us see the change that is needed. Let us act for the dignity of every person, no matter his or her color.”  

Extract from letter of May 25, 2020
This February, the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSOCD) took place from February 10-19th, 2020 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Commission was chaired by H.E. Mr. Gbolié Desiré Wulfran IPO from Côte d’Ivoire. This year the Commission spent two weeks discussing homelessness for the first time in the UN system with the theme, "Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness."

As the UN had never looked at homelessness and housing in this way, they turned to Civil Society to guide them in their conversations. This meant that civil society was more involved in the conference planning, panels and events which gave the two weeks an energy that the Commission has been lacking over the last few years. Civil Society made sure that those with lived experiences of homelessness were present and heard. They were front and center in many of the discussions grounding the conversations in their experiences of homelessness, and at the same time proposing solutions as to the way forward.

Ahead of the Commission, experts gathered in Nairobi to create working definitions on homelessness. The definition drafted by the expert group attempted to fully encompass homelessness: "Homelessness is a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space with security of tenure, rights and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety. Homelessness is a manifestation of extreme poverty and a failure of multiple systems and human rights."

This definition should include: (i) People living on the streets or other open spaces; (ii) People living in temporary, emergency or crisis accommodation; (iii) People living in severely inadequate or insecure accommodation; and (iv) People who lack access to affordable housing.

In preparation for CSocD58, the GSJPO submitted a written statement to the Commission which can be viewed in English here and in French and Spanish. The statement brings attention to growing inequality, the need for social protection including affordable housing with examples of how a home can afford dignity and security from Good Shepherd constituents at the grassroots.

Winifred and Alexis both attended the Commission, following the formal programme while also being involved in several side events. Alexis gave the GSJPO’s oral statement to the Commission focusing on the intersection of the effects of homelessness, vulnerability, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. This can be viewed by following this link.

Winifred was key in many civil society events, serving as moderator, offering her input to panels and assisting in organizing. She moderated a panel event hosted by UNANIMA International titled: “Hidden Faces of Family Homelessness from the Perspective of Women and Children/Girls.” This panel featured former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, a video presentation from Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, experts from Sophia Housing, Ireland and UNANIMA’s research team and people with lived experience of homelessness. The event highlighted the hidden nature of family homelessness. These women and children are homeless but living
Embrace the World

July 2020, #54

Commission on Social Development, Continued

with extended family or in shelters and are ignored when governments create housing policy. This event also drew attention to the need of long-term housing solutions and housing-first policies that have been successful in countries like Finland.

Winifred was also an organizer in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floor’s Side Event which was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations and UNDESA and co-sponsored by UNRISD, INPEA, Global Call for Action Against Poverty (GCAP), the ILO, The Institute of Global Homelessness, the Africa Platform for Social Protection, the Stakeholder Group on Ageing, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities and USP 2030. The event’s panel featured speakers from the Costa Rican Mission, UNDESA and civil society experts on housing and homelessness. The event discussed rising inequalities globally, the need for universal social protection and ending homelessness, showcasing how universal social protection across the life cycle can be part of the solution to ending homelessness.

During the Commission, five resolutions were negotiated by Member States to be approved. The resolution on the priority theme on homelessness was passed by the Commission’s 45 members. The resolution is historic as it is the first formal UN resolution concerned with homelessness and civil society pushed hard to get the right language included. While the definition put forward by Civil Society was not adopted word for word, the outcome document’s description of homelessness affirmed a working definition and leaves room for further advocacy on this issue. Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness

Many who attended commented on the infectious energy present and attributed it to the increased presence of Civil Society and those with lived experiences of homelessness. We hope this continues into next year’s Commission as the Commission looks at the priority theme ‘Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all’ chaired by Argentina. You can learn about the 59th Session as preparation continues here. Save the Date! International Day of the Girl is October 11—Alexis Schutz

International Day of the Girl is celebrated annually on October 11 to promote girl’s empowerment and fulfilment of their human rights while also highlighting the challenges that girls all over the world face. This year’s official theme is ‘My Voice, Our Equal Future. The celebrations will be moving to digital platforms amid the global pandemic. The day will be preceded by the 11 days of action. The Working Group on Girls (WGG) have modified the official theme to read ‘Be Bold– From Equality to Equity’. Follow #IDG2020, #BeBold, #EquityforGirls, #EqualitytoEquity. Under the theme IDG 2020 will focus on reimagining a world shaped by girls’ voice, vision and solutions to: (i) live free from gender-based violence, harmful practices, HIV/AIDS; (ii) learn new skills toward the futures they chose; and (iii) lead as a generation of activists accelerating social change. The GSUP Office looks forward to your collaboration in celebrating the day and engaging in the 11 days of action. An IDG 2020 communications toolkit will be shared in September to advocate shared key messages, raise awareness and demand actions from stakeholders and decision-makers. Read ‘A New Era for Girls’ (UNICEF)
The CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) Committee have prepared a general recommendation on Article 6 of CEDAW – an article with 23 words well known to us all: “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.” The General Recommendation address the content of the article in relation to migrant women. It is a welcome document of 33 pages and 256 footnotes. The documentation is available in English only. Global Shepherd, Malaysia, the GSIPP Office and the NGO Committee on Migration, with whom Cecilie represents us, made submissions commenting on the General Recommendation. You can review the various submission at this link. If you are interested in knowing more about the text of the General Recommendation contact Winifred winifreddohertyrgs@gmail.com who will conduct a webinar on the topic linking three of the position papers to this one article- Article 6 - to empower you to examine the article in the context of your country and make a submission to the CEDAW Committee when country reports are due. The CEDAW Convention is now 41 years old, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years UN Women 10 years and the Sustainable Development Goals 5 years. When will we see Gender Justice and zero tolerance of discrimination and violence on the basis of race and sex? Women’s Rights are Human Rights! Girls Rights are Human Rights! This article is a call to action for all women and girls to stand up and be heard.

The Commission on the Status of Women 64th session morphed to one session on March 9th adopting a political declaration on the occasion of Beijing +25. The two-week commission was then suspended because of the onset of the Coronavirus.

The political declaration expresses concern that, overall, progress has not been fast or deep enough, that in some areas progress has been uneven, that major gaps remain and that obstacles, including structural barriers, discriminatory practices and the feminization of poverty continue to persist. There was added concern that 25 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, no country has fully achieved gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Many women and girls today experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability and marginalization throughout their life course. An important point is made in paragraph 15 reiterating the importance of the Beijing Declaration and its twelve Platforms for Action.

On April 3rd, we learned of the postponement of the Generation Equality Forum until the first half of 2021. The Generation Equality Forum was going to be that moment to galvanize gender equality and the empowerment of women on the global stage. Much work had been done setting the scene culminating in the announcement of 6 Action Coalition: (i) Gender-Based Violence; (ii) Economic justice and rights; (iii) Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; (iv) Feminist action for climate justice; (v) Technology and innovation for Gender Equality and (vi) Feminist movements and leadership. Financing for real change is the objective – enough with rhetoric. The countries of France and Mexico are members of the core group together with a representative from UN Women, and Civil Society. While the coronavirus continues to stalk the globe we read and hear of the increased burden on women and girls coupled with increased human rights violations, while being trapped in situations of domestic violence and poverty. Will the challenge to the economy set in motion by the coronavirus give rise to new ways of engaging in economic wellbeing that are sustainable, equitable and inclusive of all or is it a rush to return to ‘normal’ with increased inequality and the exploitation of people an planet for profit? Our hope had been that 2020 would have been a transformative year for
gender equality! This has not happened. In the midst of the pain, suffering and death accompanying the coronavirus will the global community risk to address the embedded systemic and structural causes that have perpetrated exploitation, violence, inequality, and the demeaning of the dignity of the person and seek transformative ways of living sustainably, ensuring eco-just and gender-just behaviours?

Over 1,300 applications were received from civil society organizations to lead the Action Coalitions. The 65 initial leaders represent Member States, diverse feminist and women’s rights organizations, youth-led organizations, philanthropic entities, UN agencies and other international organizations (full list here). The Action Coalitions’ leaders bring deep commitment to and experience in advancing gender equality and women’s human rights and reflect the different experiences and identities of women and girls from around the world.

Further appointments of the Action Coalitions’ leaders will be made in the next few months, including private sector companies and youth-led organizations, to ensure intersectional and intergenerational leadership. Read more.

The NGO Community proved itself more flexible and innovative during this Coronavirus pandemic time than the United Nations although it is now catching up. The Commission on the Status of Women had been adjourned. The World Health Organization officially declared the coronavirus to be a pandemic on 11 March. Other meeting and conferences were cancelled including the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, April 24; and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, April 13-24. The Security Council continued to meet in person initially and then moved to working on line when legal difficulties were reconciled particularly around security and voting procedures. Before the coronavirus pandemic the United Nations was already experiencing a crisis with multilateralism which continues to be fractured over the origin of the virus which prevented the Security Council from having a resolution in response to the pandemic’s threat to peace and security.

Throughout the Secretary-General António Guterres has been a lone voice calling for measured and appropriate responses to the pandemic globally. His first call, 23 March was for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world so as to focus on the ‘true fight of our lives’ ...and ‘to help create corridors for life-saving aid and to open precious windows for diplomacy and to bring hope to places among the most vulnerable to the Coronavirus.’ On 3 April, Secretary General reported that fighters in 12 countries -Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Libya, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen – had expressed their acceptance for the call.

At the end of March there was new and alarming evidence emerging of the exponential rise in domestic violence due to social distancing, ‘stay at home’ advisories and the closure of many services that women and girls normally have access to including shelters. The Secretary General urged all governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of their national response plans for COVID-19. Many if not all UN Agencies and Human Rights Personnel have developed briefs illustrating the impact of COVID 19 in specific groups. See English; French; Spanish.

"The 2030 Agenda is our roadmap and its goals and targets are tools to get there." - António Guterres
A constant phrase from the Secretary-General is that of ‘build back better’ using the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals to address many of the issues that have given rise to the pandemic, including poverty and inequality, The High Level Political Forum – a forum to review implementation of the SDG’s has been scheduled as a virtual event with the programme including the high level thematic panels and the voluntary national reviews. The theme of the HLPF is “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. Little did we realize when the theme was being set that we would be in the midst of a global pandemic. No specific set of goals are being reviewed and while the draft Ministerial Declaration recognizes COVID 19 it falls far short of the call of the Secretary General for leadership, foresight, innovation, finance and collaboration among all governments and all stakeholders. Unfortunately, to date the outcome document ‘The Ministerial Declaration has not been agreed among Member States despite the fact that the High Level Political Forum ended on July 16th.

A very strong policy, calling out for implementation without delay, is the provision of universal social protection for all including floors, with access to quality health care and income payments e.g. universal child benefits, income payments to persons who are unemployed, have disabilities and pensions to older people.

TARGET 1.3 implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

UN during Coronavirus, Continued

The coronavirus has disrupted everyone lives across the globe and for us in New York or Geneva it is no exception. Mirjam Beike in Geneva caught the last train home to Germany just before the borders closed. Alexis Schutz, Cecilie Kern and Winifred had the luxury of working from home starting at the end of the second week in March. A week later Alexis moved to her parents’ home in Pennsylvania. Cecilie stayed in New York city while she completed her last semester of studies online. The Commission on the Status of Women for which we were all geared up had been adjourned. At the end of February Winifred started a process of negotiation with Kalaivani Subbramaniam and Karen Tai from Global Shepherd in Malaysia to cancel their trip to New York for the Commission as the spread of the virus seems to be taking hold. Both Kali and Karen hoped to participate in the Commission on the 25th Anniversary of 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995. They were presenting on different panels on their experience working on Human Trafficking issues in Malaysia.

Towards the end of March there was a call from the Irish Government to all Irish citizens in the US welcoming their return to Ireland as numbers of infected people increased in the USA. This was done knowing how difficult it is to access health care in the US if one is without insurance. While the call was tempting Winifred decide to stay with the community in 17th Street, New York City. Towards the end of March and into April the situation in New York City was at crisis levels – the absence of a robust public health care system was laid bare and everyone was affected by it. Hospitals could not cope with the numbers being admitted and the numbers of people who were succumbing to the virus were shocking. Added to this there was shortage of personal protective equipment for medical personnel and shortage of the much-needed respirators for people infected. The sight of a field hospital in Central Park and the arrival of the naval hospital Ship to New York harbor were harrowing scenes indicating the seriousness of the situation and the lack of the most basic services for people who were infected. The global pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the inequality that exists in the United States, has shown whom we depend on for food, medical care and essential services. Unfortunately, the people who perform these services are often the very people who are taken for granted, unseen, ignored and
exploited. Television reports of what it was like inside hospital walls, the sight of the large refrigerated trucks outside hospitals (there were three in close proximity to 17th Street) and photographs of the Potters field, Hart Island, NY where mass burials took place were distressing. The emotional toll on medical staff in New York city is equated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Who cares for the carers? The commitment and dedication of people to people in these situations, nothing less that ‘giving one’s life’ for the other without counting the cost to self, or rationalizing the threat to family of becoming infected because of daily and constant exposure to the virus.

Until recently, the medical advice was if you feel ill, stay at home, self-isolate, self-monitor symptoms and only seek medical care as a last resort. Hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes and ordinary fever reducing medication e.g. Paracetamol, Advil, were not available. Shortage was everywhere. Some supplies have begun to appear – new brands, some approved, some not – one wonders who are the opportunists exploiting for profit on a vulnerable city and country seeking basic hygiene products – an absolute foundation for public health. So many structural and systemic issues have been unveiled by the coronavirus but unfortunately the rush by some is to get back to normal life irrespective of the consequences for people. Writing this in the middle of June – the advertisement in New York City urge everyone to get tested.

While the world community grapples with the Coronavirus, the US, traditionally a significant player within the United Nations, has acted as an obstructionist in this global emergency preventing any quick and united responses from the Security Council, fault-finding and defunding of the World Health Organization (WHO) and most recently is attacking member of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The GSJJP Office is grateful to the Good Shepherd National Advocacy Office in Washington, DC for taking action to object to such decisions in formulating and signing a letter of protest.

The work of the GSJJP office is as vibrant and engaging as ever. The team meet on zoom twice every week to support and update each other. Cecilie had her graduation from her Masters program on line from Columbia University. We congratulate her on her great success. The office with members of the NGO community had a Zoom ‘hang out party’ with her and also celebrated Alexis’s birthday. Mirjam Beike is on her way back to Geneva as the UN is opening there. The UN in New York remains closed.

(In zoom picture Winfred Doherty, Barbara O’Carroll, Cecilie Kern, Alexis Schutz, Amy Maltz, Cecelia O’Dwyer, Mirjam Beike, Teresa Blumenstein and Sheila Smith.)

Webinars on Position Papers in Progress in Asia Pacific—Winifred Doherty

An invitation from the Mission Development Office in Asia Pacific has led to the creation of a series of Webinars on the Position Papers. Three papers: Migration, Human Trafficking and the Girl Child have been completed. Each paper is presented in two parts – a) Review of the position paper while developing it content – Winifred Doherty and b) application of the presentation within ministry in the region – Theresa Symons. These webinars have generated much interest with a large number of participants. For the Human Trafficking Session there were 61 Zoom Accounts with about 103 participants from across all units of Asia Pacific, CLT and Latin America. 📸
This past fall, the GSJPO undertook an evaluation of the office’s ministry in relation to the Congregational directives. The evaluation was undertaken by Marina El Khoury, an Independent Evaluation Consultant. The main headings - relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and added value are presented under findings and challenges. The recommendations include short term, medium term and long-term actions with a call for a sharper focus and more ‘buy in’ by Units, the Good Shepherd International Foundation with strong Congregational ownership.

As 2020 has taken turns we never could have expected, the office has used this time to begin consultations on the report with networks throughout the Congregation to create ownership of the report, hear from people on the ground about what they are seeing in justice peace work and receive feedback on the report. The hope of these consultations is to better inform the way the GSJPO moves forward with the information from the evaluation.

The first conversation began with a few Justice Peace Contacts from the Asia Pacific region, the GSJPO and contacts from the Asia Pacific MDO. This conversation was focused on the evaluation report, the COVID-19 situation in the JP’s countries and what this time of COVID-19 might mean for the work of JP. There was a general consensus that the evaluation was a good moment for the office and that many of the concerns listed in the report were felt by the JP’s in the region. It was brought up by many of the JPs that there is a disconnection in the work of justice peace. The justice peace work is seen as something separate and not a focus of province work. This keeps the JP contact off on her own and makes it difficult to connect into the work of the ministers when asked for information from the GSJPO. It is easier for JP contacts who have connections with the MDO to get this information and be better informed about the work of ministries throughout the province, allowing for better advocacy in these areas. There was concern about getting the work of JP to the grassroots and getting the grassroots to the UN. Another key area that resonated with the JP contacts was the lack of ownership of justice peace throughout the Congregation. One Sister offered these words on the matter: “Every justice peace person is a Good Shepherd and every Good Shepherd is a justice peace person.” The JP contacts struggle to get the programs in their province to see that they are doing the work of justice peace.

The second consultation was focused on North America and brought together the National Advocacy Center, two ministries from the region, the North American Conference of Provincials, one JP contact from North America and the GSJPO. The first part of the conversation highlighted three areas of concern from the report: the suggestion of an Advisory Board; Integration; Staff. Many shared that they felt an advisory board outside of the CLT for the GSJPO would be beneficial. The issue of connecting the work of the UN to the grassroots was also raised in this consultation followed by the need for a different structure in the Congregation to assist with this. The group acknowledged that the position papers should be better taught throughout the Congregation and information needs to be better shared. The second part of the conversation focused on how the GSJPO could better collaborate with the partners in North America. The point was raised that there were opportunities for the National Advocacy Center and the GSJPO to work together more and that the values of justice peace and the GSJPO could be better shared with staff in programs throughout the region as a way to connect the work to JP.

Both consultations showed the GSJPO that the evaluation report captured the challenges facing justice peace in the Congregation well and that these are systemic challenges throughout the Congregation. These challenges need to be faced by the whole of the Congregation and solutions must come from those on the ground combined with the analysis of the report. There are steps to be taken in the report, but these steps must be taken with the support of the Congregation as a whole in order for the GSJPO to be fully integrated into the work of the Congregation. The hope is to continue these conservations and consultations throughout the regions to bring about the change needed.
The COVID-19 pandemic has brought most of the world to a stand-still and has fundamentally changed global human mobility. Governments around the world have introduced measures to ‘flatten the curve’ of infections, including travel restrictions, border closures, the suspension of labor migration, and the slowing of migration processing and assistance to asylum seekers.

While the COVID-19 virus knows no borders, gender, race, religion, class or immigration status, the impacts of the pandemic have highlighted the systemic inequalities that persist in our society. This is particularly true for many people on the move, including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally-displaced persons. In the recently-launched UN policy briefing on COVID-19 and People on the Move, the Secretary-General of the United Nations frames the pandemic as three interlocking crises: a health crisis, a socio-economic crisis, and a protection crisis.

Migrants and refugees are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, working as essential workers. Because of their vital work, these workers are exposed to higher risks of contracting the virus, and yet many lack basic labor protections, especially informal and undocumented workers. For many, lack of health insurance has negatively impacted migrants’ ability to take preventive measures against COVID-19 and to receive medical care if they contract the virus. Many support and care services run by civil society organizations have been closed due to lockdown policies, which has led to decreased access to essential services, including healthcare, shelter, and crisis response for those experiencing abuse or violence. This especially impacts undocumented migrants who may be reluctant to enter medical facilities or other public services for fear of being reported to immigration authorities.

Crowded living environments also affect the implementation of preventive measures such as social distancing.

This is the case for irregular migrants in administrative detention, refugees in camps, or migrant workers in highly populated migrant labor housing, who experience inadequate sanitation and limited access to health services.

The lack of inclusion of migrants and refugees into public health strategies has further exacerbated existing inequalities. Information-sharing has had a significant impact on migrant communities, as some communications on COVID-19 were not available to people in a language they could understand, and misinformation and politicization of issues has led to the stigmatization and exclusion of migrants from response and recovery measures.

Many people on the move tend to have few, if any, reserves that might soften socio-economic shocks. Migrants are therefore among the hardest hit by reduced incomes, increasing unemployment, and increasing expenses and price hikes for basic commodities. Many migrant workers and their families are ineligible for government-provided unemployment benefits, welfare or stimulus programs. Loss of employment among migrant workers is compounded by the fact that they are often not covered by protections of standard labor law or social protection systems and the risk that layoffs could trigger the expiration of visa or work permits, forcing them into undocumented or irregular status or to return to their home countries. The pandemic’s socio-economic consequences are affecting in particular those migrant workers and refugees in the low-wage informal economy who are excluded from decent work and social protection measures.

The loss of livelihoods for these migrants not only impacts their lives in their countries of destination, but also their families in their countries of origin. The World Bank estimates that in 2020, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are expected to drop by around 20 percent to $445 billion, from $554 billion in 2019, crippling the economic lifeline to migrant families and communities, which will lead to an increase in poverty and limit households’ access to much-needed health services.

The crisis has also exacerbated the already precarious situation of women and girls on the move, who face higher risks of exposure to gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation, and have increasingly limited access to protection and response services. Women play an outsized role in health services, which disproportionately expose them to health risks. Furthermore, owing to entrenched gender stereotypes, women on the move also carry the majority of the burden of both paid and unpaid domestic and care work, which is exacerbated by lockdown or stay-at-home orders. Female migrants are also at heightened
risk of gender-based violence, in particular intimate partner violence exacerbated by confinement and lockdown measures. Migrants and refugees often face barriers in reaching out to police, justice or gender-based violence services, particularly when they are undocumented, for fear of retaliation, stigma, detention and possible deportation. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that in some situations sexual and gender-based violence protection and response services have not necessarily been declared essential, making it even more difficult for women and girls on the move to access them.

A new, inclusive approach to human mobility

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to many restrictions on human mobility across the globe. At a time when trust in multilateralism is weak, this is worrisome to advocates and policymakers who promote more open and flexible approaches to global migration management. Across the world, migrants and their families have experienced policies and rhetoric from politicians that seek to keep the virus—and especially the people who carry it—away. This betrays the fact that the COVID-19 virus does not discriminate based on nationality, and does not care about political borders. In a public health crisis such as this, exclusion of any person or group of people is detrimental to the whole of society - if one person is sick, we are all at risk.

This approach not only is not human rights-based – it also fails to recognize that migrant essential workers were key to our economies and societies before the pandemic and are likely to become even more essential in the recovery to sustain our weakened economies and exhausted societies. From doctors, nurses, and care workers to delivery drivers and shelf stackers, many of these “essential workers” come from abroad. In the U.S. for example, 30 percent of doctors and 27 percent of farm workers are foreign born. In Australia, 54 percent of doctors and 35 percent of nurses are immigrants. In the European Union, 13 percent of essential workers are non-EU nationals. In some key occupations, however, the share is substantially higher: More than 1 in 3 domestic workers, more than 1 in 4 construction/mining workers, and 1 in 5 workers in food processing are migrants.

These essential workers have been celebrated as heroes during the pandemic, but they are really the backbone of our societies and economies. The COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to evaluate the positive contributions of people on the move and the critical role of migration to countries of origin, transit, and destination. A new approach to migration policy is needed to recognize and value the contribution that people on the move make to societies, and to work towards regularization and inclusion of migrants and refugees into the political, social and economic lives of their communities of destination.

Reforms are happening around the world to recognize migrant workers’ contribution to the COVID-19 response and, most importantly, to put in place measures to remove barriers and facilitate migrants’ access to labor markets, social protection, and basic services. Some of these reforms are more comprehensive than others: Portugal has temporarily granted all migrants and asylum-seekers citizenship rights; in Italy, the regularization only applies to some sectors; in different cities and states in the U.S., policies have extended social protection to migrants, and emergency measures have granted foreign-born health care workers temporary work permits or skills recognition. While these are all steps in the right direction, they are temporary measures. What happens when these policies expire? How do we sustain these reforms beyond the pandemic? How do we go beyond the usual emergency/crisis narrative that so often taints migration debates and leaves us with little space for a balanced, rational, and politically-viable approach to reform? Governments must look long-term to address the lack of regular migration pathways that fill critical skills and labor gaps and enable people to fulfill their aspirations. They must also pursue policies of social inclusion that enable people to access essential services regardless of their migration status, and counter xenophobia and discrimination in all its forms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our strength and highlighted systemic inequalities. It has also connected us in new ways and renewed our motivation to act for more just and equitable policies. In the face of the pandemic, rhetoric must change from discrimination to solidarity. We need a conversation about the future of work, of our societies, and our economies, where care workers, fruit pickers, nurses, and all people on the move are recognized and valued for the contribution they make, no matter where they are from.
As the United Nations marks its 75th anniversary, it will require a new surge in international cooperation and multilateralism. On May 14 and 15 UN 2020 with Together First hosted the UN75 People’s Forum for the UN we need issuing a People’s Declaration and Plan for Global Action.

The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great challenge, including the worst global health crisis in its history. Will it bring the world closer together? Or will it lead to greater divides and mistrust? Your views can make a difference. You can have your say by taking the survey which is available in multiple languages.

The opening of the 75th Session of the General Assembly in September 2020 will be virtual due to the continuing impact of COVID 19.

UNGA High-level Meeting to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Beijing Women’s Conference will be held on October 1st.

Editor’s Note: “Embrace the World” can be published, thanks to each of your contributions with articles, stories and other news concerning justice peace issues in the world-wide Good Shepherd Congregation. We are grateful to the National Advocacy Office, Washington, Global Shepherds, Malaysia, MDO Asia Pacific and GSJJP Office Staff for this edition. We continue to count on you for the next editions of the journal. Share your activities, news and events in your Units and countries with winifreddohertyrgs@gmail.com before October 31, 2020.

The UN75 People’s Declaration and Plan for Global Action, “Humanity at a Crossroads: Global Solutions for Global Challenges,” released at a formal handover ceremony Thursday May 14 involving the 74th President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande.