Honor the Mary of Magdala in your life by having her name added to our list on Catholic Women Preach!

Did you miss an issue of our weekly FOCUS E-News? Catch up!

Promote Women Deacons!
Add your name to our 100 women deacons list!
Start a conversation with DeaconChat!

FutureChurch Teleconference
Join FutureChurch for our September 13 teleconference with the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests talking about their national plan for priest-less parishes

Coming soon - Priest stats by country!
Get priest stats by diocese

SAVE THE DATE!
October 27, 2017
Sr. Sandra Schneiders discusses the Gospel of John as a model for parish/community life today!

From the Executive Director
Who are the women that amaze you?
I can immediately name three this week.
Fortress Press has just posted their notice on the upcoming

FutureChurch will be hosting several book signing events toward the end of the year (dates TBA) and in October 2018 (exact dates TBD depending on the dates of the 2018 Synod), you can travel with Chris and FutureChurch to Rome to explore the sites of early Christian women leaders while getting a first hand tutorial on her research discoveries. CLICK HERE if you would like to join the list of those interested in traveling with Chris next October.

A long time friend of FutureChurch is ending her tenure at *Women's Ordination Conference* and moving on to a new career. Erin Hanna, co-director of the organization sent out her good-bye letter this week. She wrote, "While I am truly proud of the many accomplishments during my tenure here, I am deeply aware that it is this collective sisterhood that has carried WOC to the powerful, prophetic and visionary place it is today."

And while Erin transitions to a new role, we are joyful knowing that Kate McElwee will be stepping up to be Executive Director.
As executive director of FutureChurch, I can say that working with Erin and Kate, including our efforts on NunJustice and A Church for Our Daughters, has been a delight. Their creative approach to reform has created vivid images forever etched in our minds of pink smoke, pink crowds, singing divas, cool dancing, and more! FutureChurch sends all our love and prayers as Erin moves into the next phase of her career and as Women's Ordination Conference continues their important work for the future of the Church under the leadership of Kate McElwee!

We owe so much to the women who shaped, proclaimed, and challenged our tradition. Without women like Chris, Erin, Kate, and foremothers like Catherine of Siena who challenged Catholic leaders and even the pope our Gospel work would be compromised in important ways.

We are all called to do our part. Please continue to build the church for tomorrow by taking action today!

Open the discussion with your bishop on married priests

Write a letter to our U.S. cardinals asking them to support Cardinal Anders Arborelius' idea of a College of Women advisors to Pope Francis

DeaconChat: Start a Conversation on Women Deacons

Thank you for all you do!
Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

**FutureChurch seeks Program Director**

FutureChurch is an exciting place to work! The possibilities for creativity are endless as we carry out the important work of reform in the Catholic Church.

If you are interested or know someone who would make an excellent candidate, please share this notice with your networks!

**Program Director Job Description**

**Saying farewell to Fr. Mike Crosby by Sr. Chris Schenk**

On August 10, I attended a wake service for Capuchin Father Mike Crosby at Detroit’s St. Bonaventure Monastery. Mike had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer some months earlier and, after treatments failed, entered hospice care at St. Bonaventure’s where his brother Dan, who is also a Capuchin, could accompany him **until his death** on August 5.

Mike was a very good friend to FutureChurch and to me over the years. He spoke at church reform events all over the U.S., invariably attracting crowds of admirers who appreciated his high energy and his passionate love for scripture and of God’s beloved *anawim*—the poor and marginalized ones.

Every now and again one of us would be under pressure from...
“the powers that be” in our church who didn’t always appreciate our healthy challenge to the status quo. We traded notes about our individual situations and worked hard to juggle conscience alongside our love and commitment to the institutional church. Mike was a true brother to me in these times of struggle and I tried to be a good sister to him.

So it was heart-consoling to convey the love and appreciation of FutureChurch, indeed the entire reform community, at the well-attended service at which Fr. Dan Crosby presided. Many stories were told about Mike’s adventurous, loving, and highly productive life. But Dan’s story of Mike’s decision to enter the Capuchins stuck with me. Mike, it turns out, had a rather madcap youth. So, he first considered entering an order that ministered to wayward boys (so to speak). Dan intuited that Mike was resisting a call to the Capuchins which he had himself entered several years earlier. When Mike came to visit, the 2 brothers went for a walk. Mike spoke at length about the concrete ministries of the other order before challenging Dan: “So what do the Capuchins have to offer?” Dan paused, then said simply: “Mike all the Capuchins do is the Gospel.” The Gospel. And yes, that is what Mike Crosby lived throughout his long and loving life. The Gospel. In the end, it is as simple as that. Thanks Mike!

Mike's presentation at FutureChurch's 25th Anniversary
C. Vanessa White Preaches!

C. Vanessa White begins by singing an African American Spiritual this week. She preaches about the Canaanite woman who changed the mind of Jesus with her bold request. And she tells the story of how she too learned to be bold in a time of uncertainty.

I'm Gonna Do What the Spirit Say Do.
. . I'm Gonna Do What the Spirit Say Do.
. . When the Spirit Say Do, I'm Gonna Do Oh Lord . . . I'm Gonna Do What the Spirit Say Do. . . (African American Spiritual)

How many times do we talk ourselves out of doing something because of doubt and fear or of lack of confidence or a hardening of the heart?

Several years ago, as a young adult in the Church who directed a Catholic lay volunteer service program, I discerned the need to go back to school to pursue my degree in theology and ministry. At that time, I did not have the necessary funds for graduate school and doubted that I would be able to pursue my call. It was during this time, I encountered someone who would change my life. She was Adrian Dominican Sr. Jamie Phelps. I shared with her my dilemma and she told me to ask my employers for the money. I remember feeling that I couldn’t do it, for they had in fact been so generous with me in the past and even if I did ask, I feared...
"Do not block the blessing," she [Sr. Jamie] said.

**Sr. Joan Chittister preaches**

**Number one reason for the decline in the Catholic Church in Canada -- its treatment of women**

Michael W. Higgins, Distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought, Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut, and past president of two Canadian Catholic universities, remembers the hope that enveloped the Canadian Catholic Church after Vatican II. But with the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the church's influence and vibrancy slid. The reasons are many, but the Church's treatment of women stands out.

Higgins writes that for many post-conciliar Catholics the deepest disappointment with hierarchical leadership has been its stance on women and ministry. At one time the undisputed international leader on the empowerment of women in the church—thanks to avowed feminists like Remi De Roo of the Diocese of Victoria and to interventions at several Roman synods on the charisms and evolving roles of women—the Canadian episcopate listened carefully to women of faith, appointed female theologians as consultants, and advocated publicly for enhanced positions.
and greater inclusivity within the clerical structure. But this enlightened and gradualist approach was beaten down by papal intransigence, if not hostility, and by the reluctance of the newer bishops to adopt policies or positions at variance with pontifical perspectives. The result has been a silent departure of multitudes from the institution, a departure defined not by anger, animosity, or resentment but by a sadness grounded in a sense of their own irrelevancy.

Deborah Pecoskie, a Catholic educator and former chair of the board of governors of St. Jerome’s University, has observed: “I believe that society as a whole in Canada has contributed more positively to the lives of Canadian women than the Church has done. I believe that the Church holds an ambivalence between our civil society and our spiritual lives.... The Catholic Church is effectively squandering the opportunity to be a visible faith leader for today and for the future.”

More in Commonweal by Higgins

The Church Needs to Wake Up to the Power of the Laity

In a Voices of Faith interview, Sr. Terry Rickard, OP, says that describing women who desire leadership as “power hungry” is an unfair characterization. We do not say the same about bishops or priests who lead our dioceses and parishes. Leadership enables us to make an impact.” Sr. Terry Rickard,
OP is the President of RENEW International, a ministry of New Evangelization that has reached over 25 million people in 160 dioceses with its innovative formation processes for small Christian communities.

The heart of the mission of RENEW International is to renew the church and to engage laity in its leadership. Sr. Terry Rickard, OP explains: “We are in a critical time in the Church. Organizations like Renew International are innovative. We are committed to spiritual renewal both personal and pastoral – renewing parish life to make it more vibrant, welcoming and create a greater sense of belonging. We do that through the vehicle of forming small Christian communities that meet in people’s homes.”

Parishes need resources and training more than ever as clergy continue to age and some parishes serve large communities with perhaps 10,000 or 20,000 parishioners. “Maintenance is not enough,” believes Sr. Rickard, “we are losing people who want to have a connection. The Church needs to wake up!”

**Read more at VOF**

**Catholics seek recourse in parish closure in Hartford**

The merger of three Roman Catholic churches in town has hit a roadblock, thanks to an appeal filed by a parishioner at one of the closed parishes.

The merger of the Church of the Epiphany into St. Thomas
Beckett and St. Bridget is the subject of a canonical recourse or appeal. Church of the Epiphany, located on Huckins Road, closed in June as part of a merger with St. Thomas Beckett and St. Bridget. The merger created a single parish, St. Bridget of Sweden. Masses are no longer said at Church of the Epiphany.

According to Michael W. Higgins, a Distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought at Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport, such appeals “are a lengthy process that can wind up in Rome.” Higgins said parishioners of Church of the Epiphany “aren’t doing anything wrong” in appealing the ruling of the Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese is the first step in the appeal process, even though the decision to close Church of the Epiphany came from that level of the church’s hierarchy. If the Archdiocese refuses to overturn its decision, Higgins said the appeal will at some point be reviewed by the Papal Nuncio, the Catholic Church’s ambassador to the United States, Higgins said.

“Both sides will probably consult the Papal Nuncio because they have a great deal of expertise in canonical law,” he said. Higgins said closing churches “is a very bad strategy.”

One alternative to closing churches, Higgins said, is being tried in Germany. Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and
a member of the church’s College of Cardinals, has authorized a broader use of lay people in the day-to-day operations and ceremonies of the Archdiocese’s churches, he said.

“It’s a good way to keep the parishes open and gives members of the congregation a greater sense of involvement,” Higgins said.

Read more
Closures in Hartford diocese

German Cardinal wants laypeople to lead parishes instead of closing them

Cardinal Reinhard Marx has strongly rejected the increasingly common option of coping with the dwindling number of ordained ministers by combining or “clustering” parishes.

The 63-year-old cardinal is a top aide and advisor to Pope Francis. He recently told the 180 members of Munich’s diocesan council – it’s most important lay body – that it was important to preserve individual parishes as a way of guaranteeing the Church’s presence locally.

Speaking at the council’s plenary assembly on March 18th, the cardinal said the Archdiocese of Munich would introduce a pilot project in the fall with new models of parish leadership. Specifically, he said full-time and voluntary lay personnel would take over parishes.
The move is significant given that Cardinal Marx is a member of the pope’s C9 advisory group of cardinals, as well as coordinator of the Vatican’s Council for the Economy.

**UISG launches visionary plan to develop council of women canon lawyers**

Global Sisters Report writes that Sr. Licia Puthuparambil has joined the five-member Canon Law Council of the Rome-based International Union of Superiors General. The union, known as UISG, is the organization of the superiors general of Catholic women congregations based in Rome.

In January 2015, Loreto Sr. Patricia Murray, executive secretary of the UISG, informed me about their plan to create a world council of women religious canon lawyers, now known as the Canon Law Council. They wanted to select one member from all five continents.

Puthuparambil, a member of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate, had cancer in 2016. Currently, the 57-year-old nun works from her community’s provincial house in Bengaluru, southern India. She conducts retreats and speaks at meetings of her congregation as well as others in India when she is not traveling overseas to attend Canon Law Council meetings.

Puthuparambil, who has a master's degree in canon law from St. Peter's Pontifical Institute in Bengaluru, has been
a member of the Canon Law Society of India since 2000. She has also served her congregation as a provincial secretary, provincial councillor, formator, teacher and local superior.

Promising development: Priests who married may be formally called back to the institution in Brazil

Earlier this year, Brazilian liberation theologian and ex-Franciscan friar, Leonardo Boff suggested that married priests in Brazil could soon be re-employed in pastoral care.

"This is an explicit request from the Brazilian bishops to the Pope," Boff told the "Cologne City Gazette." Pope Francis wanted to meet this request, initially for an experimental phase in Brazil.

Boff referred to the priestly deficit worldwide saying, "This country with its 140 million Catholics should have at least 100,000 priests. But there are only 18,000. Institutionally, this is a disaster," said Boff. In addition, such an experiment would be "an impulse that the Catholic Church will lose the fetters of the celibacy."

According to the former Franciscan friar, he continued to perform priestly functions even after his resignation in 1992 - with the explicit approval of the bishops in his home country. "So far, no bishop I know has ever criticized or forbidden me and
they even rejoice and say to me, "The people have a right to the Eucharist."
Read more

**L'Osservatore reports that the biggest obstacle to reform is clergy**

Italian Fr. Guilio Cirignano, writing for *L'Osservatore Romano*, writes that the biggest obstacle to conversion that Pope Francis wants to give to the Church is, to some extent, the attitude of a large part of the clergy, at the top and at the base. Their attitude is closed, if not outright hostile. Like the disciples in the Garden of Olives, his disciples still asleep.
Read more

**Diocese's bold move to include divorced and remarried Catholics**

The diocese of Le Havre last weekend organized a meeting for separated, divorced and remarried divorced people in an effort to understand what they expect from the Church. A year after Pope Francis' "Amoris Laetitia" was published, integrating such people has become a concern for French dioceses.

The unprecedented meeting took place in Le Havre on Sunday, the day of the presidential election.

The bishop, Jean-Luc Brunin, had sent out plenty of invitations but fewer people than expected showed up: 26 people who had been through a breakup and who were now separated or...
divorced, and in some cases remarried after divorce.

They were joined by eight members of the pastoral care of the family at a newly inaugurated mayoral center for "a day of sharing and friendship".

The aim was to lay the groundwork for personal and pastoral discernment with a view to better integration into the Church. Read more

Gender equality in the Catholic Church: Too little too late?

Ireland: One woman who believes she has a vocation to the Catholic priesthood is Dr. Ann-Marie Desmond (54) of Timoleague, Co. Cork. A teacher of religion and history, with a PhD in education and degrees in theology and history, she is married with two grown-up daughters.

Hers was a traditional Catholic upbringing in a devout family and with an aunt a nun. Even when her brother was an altar server she did not question why, then, she could not become one too. Girls are now allowed be altar servers, and in most parishes these days the altar servers are girls.

It was at third level education that Ms. Desmond began to question things and later when, preparing for Masses, women like her “would organise everything, pick the readings etc., and a man [priest] would
come in, take over, and celebrate it”. She has herself been a minister of the word and of the Eucharist.

Hers has remained “a very committed faith” but she had become “very anti the institution”, she said. This was not just because of its exclusion of women but also “of gay people, and people such as the divorced and remarried, from Communion. I would want a much more inclusive church,” she continued.

Read more

Commission tragically may leave survivors out and assign them to a secondary tier as advisors to the advisors

Joshua McElwee reports that Pope Francis' commission on clergy sexual abuse is considering whether to restructure itself so that it no longer includes the direct participation of abuse survivors. It is evaluating the possibility of creating instead a separate advisory panel of individuals who have been abused by clergy. A member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors revealed the group's consideration of the idea in an NCR interview Aug. 14, saying that one of the commission's work groups has been tasked with weighing the pros and cons of such a change.

The commission appears likely to discuss the possible restructuring at its next plenary meeting in Rome in mid-September, when the original
three-year terms of its members are set to expire.

"I think that may be a more productive [way] of ensuring the voice of survivors in the work of the commission," Krysten Winter-Green, the commission member, said of the potential change. "I do not know that it's critical that a survivor needs to be actually on the commission." Read more

Are bishops up to the task of leading?

Massimo Faggioli believes the bishops have not stepped up in their role as pastoral leaders as expected under Pope Francis. Many still operate as deferential middle managers -- in the shadow of the former two papacies.

The day after Easter marked one-and-a-half years since Francis gave one of his most important speeches to explain the need for a synodal Catholic Church. Read more

Brazilian bishops' call for a Year of the Laity

Peter Feuerherd reports that reform groups such as Catholic Church Reform International and Call To Action are endorsing a call by the Brazilian bishops for a Year of the Laity, expanded to include conferences and observances around the world from November of this year until November 2018.

The meetings will focus on why
"the people of God need to be treated equally in the church" and "the people taking the Gospel out into the world," Rene Reid, director of Catholic Church Reform International.
Read more

**Head of Council doubtful about real and permanent change**

The head of the Catholic Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Council is pessimistic about the church's reform in response to the sexual abuse scandals it has been hit with and fears that things will go back to its usual state after the publicity over the issue dies down.
Read more

**Children of priests, another secretive and ugly legacy explored**

No one knows the number of sons and daughters of Catholic priests in the United States or in the world, but what is known is that hundreds — perhaps thousands — of these offspring have lived in secret, hiding their fathers' past from the world, frequently even from family members.

Still other children of clergy dads have grown up not knowing who their real father was, often mistaking him for an uncle, godfather or some other male friend or relative whom they have known from their youth. In many instances, the children of Catholic priests have failed to have their emotional, legal and financial needs met.
When they have discovered who their real father is — often later in life — some of these daughters and sons have undergone spiritual disillusionment, unable to separate themselves from the faith they love and have been raised in, and the man who did not, or could not, come forward and be a genuine dad to them. Some have experienced psychological trauma from having to carry a secret — a lie — for life.

These are among disclosures presented in a two-part series on the progeny of priests published by The Boston Globe's Spotlight team Aug. 19 and 20 and written by Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Michael Rezendes. In interviews over many months, the investigative news team found that children of Catholic priests "form an invisible legion of secrecy and neglect."

Read more

Irish church wants to end stigma

In case you missed it: Papal nuncio endorses Boy Scouts

It seems like a no-brainer to conclude that the values of the Boy Scouts are important to our society, but the Scouts have been kicked around like a religious and political football recently.

Still there are voices of sanity. Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre spoke up saying that scouting develops generosity, service and fraternity, which are all values
"our world sorely needs," the papal nuncio told Catholic Scouts gathered for Mass on July 23 during the annual Boy Scouts of America National Jamboree. "These values are the antidote to the selfishness and individualism of our society," Archbishop Christophe Pierre said in his homily. "Scouting also encourages you to work together as a team, to share adventures, and to have a greater vision of life and creation."

Read more

In case you missed it: Maltese Bishops lead the way to sacramental inclusion of divorced and remarried Catholics

The Bishops of Malta issued new norms on *Amoris Laetitia*. Pope Francis thanked them while conservative media outlets raised alarms.

The Maltese bishops wrote that with "an informed and enlightened conscience," a separated or divorced person living in a new relationship who is able "to acknowledge and believe that he or she is at peace with God," the bishops said, "cannot be precluded from participating in the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist."

The Maltese "Criteria for the Application of Chapter VIII of 'Amoris Laetitia,'" Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the family, was published Jan. 13 after being sent to all of the country's priests by Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta and...
You won't want to miss these FutureChurch events!

Please support this work!

Be inspired! Catholic Women Preach!

Learn what you can do to save your parish community

New! Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life 2017 - 2018 SERIES

Check out events offered by our friends

Register for CTA East Coast Conference in Baltimore, MD

October 20 - 21, 2017
For more information contact:
Ryan Sattler, CTA MD Chair
ryansattler@comcast.net
443.274.1180

Go online:
http://conference.calltoactionmd.org