

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The call for the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions to begin a presence in the United States of America was affirmed at the 2020 General Chapter. Aligned with the mission priority of ministry “with migrants and victims of human trafficking,” the congregation was introduced by Sister Brid Long SSL to a non-government organization known as LifeWay Network, located in New York City.

LifeWay Network was founded by Sister Joan Dawber SSC (Sister of Charity of Halifax) in 2007 as a response to the need for safe housing, advocacy and empowerment programs for women survivors of human trafficking. Other religious congregations in the United States also supported this initiative, offering, not only their convents, but also expertise for the Board of Governors, and Sisters to live in the home as a “host community.” Over the years, as the Sisters of these member congregations were ageing, LifeWay Network had begun a search for another religious congregation with whom to collaborate, so as to ensure that the “host community” model could continue. The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions were eager to respond.

In 2024, The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions were registered as a Not-for-Profit Corporation in the State of New York and listed in the *Official Catholic Directory* as a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization under the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

RNDM Collaboration in New York

Two RNDMs, Catherine O’Neill (Australia) and Claudia Stecker (Canada), arrived in New York City on February 2, 2023 to begin collaborating with LifeWay Network in providing women survivors of human trafficking with safe housing and a healing environment for their recovery. As “host community,” the Sisters share the home with the survivors, providing a stable living environment that fosters a sense of community and trust, so that women can heal from the trauma of human trafficking. LifeWay Network is the only organization providing safe housing for women survivors of human trafficking in New York City.

Country Profile

With 335 million people (2025), the USA is the third most populous country in the world. It is located in North America, bordered by Canada, Mexico, the Atlantic and the Pacific. It features a diverse, mostly temperate climate, ranging from Arctic (Alaska) and tropical (Hawaii/Florida) to arid (Southwest) and humid continental (Midwest).

New York City is the most populous city in the country, with 8.5 million people. There are five boroughs in NYC; RNDM presence initially began in the Bronx, and then, five months later, settled in the borough of Queens.

The U.S.A. is a multicultural society, with significant populations of White (about 58%), Hispanic/Latino (19%), Black or African American (13%), Asian (6%), and multiracial individuals. Immigration continues to shape its demographic mix. Around 83% live in urban areas.

The country's approximate religious composition is 63% Christian (40% Protestant and 21% Catholic), 7% Other Religions (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, etc.) and 30% Unaffiliated ("Nones"). Secularization is increasing, especially among younger generations, while religious diversity continues to grow through immigration. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the First Amendment.

The U.S.A. is a federal republic with a presidential system. Its Constitution was adopted in 1789 and is one of the world's oldest written Constitutions in use.

The country has the world's largest economy by nominal GDP, but the gap between rich and poor is growing. The top 10% hold 60-70% of the nation's wealth, with the top 1% holding approximately 30.5% of this; the bottom 50% holds roughly 2.5-6%.

While the literacy rate is high (99%), education quality varies by region and income.

Culturally, there is a strong emphasis on individualism, freedom, equality and innovation. Ongoing challenges, however, include racial inequality, healthcare access, housing affordability, and political polarization, characterized by debates over healthcare, climate change, immigration, gun ownership and voting rights.

RNDM Networking

Four religious congregations have been serving as Executive Board Members since LifeWay Network's establishment in 2007, and numerous congregations have supported the ministry over the years. RNDM collaboration with LifeWay Network has enabled us to develop networks among the religious congregations involved with LifeWay and beyond. RNDM is a member of the Alliance to End Human Trafficking (founded in 2013 by 15 religious sisters), and an active member of their Survivor Services Working Group. The Alliance to End Human Trafficking is a member of the Talitha Kum Network to which RNDM belongs. Our congregation is also a member of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

RNDM Sisters collaborate with LifeWay Network



Sisters form the Host Community, living in a safehouse with survivors of human trafficking

LifeWay Network Christmas party



Community gardening



Christmas outing to the "Rockettes"

LifeWay Network staff and residents enjoy an evening of bowling





Supporting Andrew Linder's **Pier to Park** marathon to raise awareness about human trafficking

ADVOCACY: RNDMs are engaged in anti-human trafficking, and climate justice initiatives, both locally, in New York City, and at the federal level in Washington D.C.



Participating in **Alliance to End Human Trafficking** advocacy promoting anti-human trafficking legislation



Joining **"Climate Week"** protest in Manhattan, September 2023, calling for an end to the use of fossil fuels



2025 LCWR Conference: RNDM Sisters are members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious

2023 Conference of the Alliance to End Human Trafficking (formerly US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking), affiliated with Talitha Kum. RNDMs are actively engaged in their Survivor Services Working Group.



World Day Against Human Trafficking, 30 July 2025: RNDM Sisters represented the Alliance to End Human Trafficking on a panel at St Patrick's Cathedral



Volunteering weekly at **St. John's Bread & Life**, Brooklyn, which provides social services and nutrition support.