

MISSION MOMENT

South-Central Synodical Women's Organization Anti-Human Trafficking Work Is Making A Difference!

By Helen Sheahan, Past President, South-Central Synodical Women's Organization

For our South-Central Synodical Women's Organization, understanding and responding to human trafficking is a call to walk with Jesus.

At the 2014 and 2017 Women of the ELCA Triennial Conventions, women voted to continue to bring awareness of and to prevent human trafficking. Women of the ELCA has focused on ending human trafficking for over a decade.

This year there were bills introduced in both legislatures on 3 topics related to human trafficking. Along with the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin and 2 other Wisconsin women's synod organizations, our women's synod board participated in the legislative process and had an impact. Over 400 postcards supporting the bills were signed by women during our 2019 Spring Gatherings in April.

In March, Helen Sheahan and Margo Holzman, women's board members, attended a hearing on Assembly Bill 41, Safe Harbor for Trafficked Youth at the state Capitol along with Rev. Cindy Crane, Director of Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, Deacon Vicki Hanrahan of the Synod staff, and other Women of the ELCA.

Our work continued September 24 when our South-Central Wisconsin Synodical Women's Organization was a co-sponsor of a rally that included education and visiting representatives and senators at the state Capitol. Women from around the state participated. The culmination of our efforts was the signing of AB 22-SB 25 into law as Act 27 on Nov. 20. This bill requires truck driver education to include information on human trafficking. Helen Sheahan was present at the signing, shook the Governor's hand, and even received a state pen, symbolic of having an active interest in the passing of the bill. The signing was very well attended by supportive legislators, Department of Human Services administrators, and anti-human trafficking advocates. What impressed Helen was the Governor's knowledge about the reason and benefits of the bill and acknowledging the efforts done on a bipartisan level in support of the bill.

Over the past four years South-Central Wisconsin Synodical Women's Organization has been offering education about human trafficking through workshops by Rev. Cindy Crane, Director of LOPPW, and Dawn Heath from Sugar Creek Lutheran Church and the Synod's Speaker's Bureau, and founder of Join the Movement Events, Inc., a nonprofit anti-human trafficking organization. These workshops and presentations have been at our Biennial Convention, synod wide women's events, and Conference Gatherings.

The women's board has made donations to Cherish All Children, a service of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, that offers services to combat human trafficking, and to Dawn Heath's Join the Movement Events, Inc., and Lutheran Social Services.

Articles to educate about human trafficking and updates about anti-human trafficking legislation appear regularly in our quarterly newsletter, The Trumpeter, which is available free via email. We have published annual prayers for anti-human trafficking before the Super Bowl for the past 3 years.

Local women's units are also active in anti-human trafficking efforts. One example this year is St. Peter's in Loganville that sponsored five forums on human trafficking and used My Neighbor Is Not For Sale, a resource by Cherish All Children, a service of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, available through WELCA.org

Nationally, Women of the ELCA also provide the following:

- A staff person - Jennifer DeLeon, ELCA Director for Justice, who is responsible for providing resources, programs, and assistance on anti-human trafficking.

Resources on WELCA.org website

- "My Neighbor is Not for Sale" is a four-part guide for adult education sessions, youth groups and more, produced by Cherish All Children, a service of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota.
- "UNDERSTANDING & RESPONDING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING", is a discussion study
- Human Trafficking 101, a PowerPoint of basic information

Exhibits at the 2015 & 2018 National ELCA Youth Gatherings on anti-sex-trafficking and collected kind gifts for anti-human trafficking organizations.

\$2000 grant in 2015 to Lutheran Office for Public Policy (LOPPW) in Wisconsin for travel, supplies, printing, and speaker expenses for their project "Safe Harbor Campaign", a statewide education program on Human Trafficking, held in 3 locations.

Thank you for your mission support that helps our church follow Jesus by putting our faith into action to protect our most vulnerable. Sometimes your offerings that get sent on to the larger church come back to our synod in forms of grants such as the once received by LOPPW. We are church together for the sake of the world!



Governor Tony Evers signs AB 22-SB 25 into law as Act. 27 on November 20. (Helen Sheahan seen left in blue). Helen Sheahan representing WELCA and Rev. Cindy Crane and Intern Amelia Gonzales represented LOPPW. The bipartisan bill Governor Evers signed into law requires commercial driving education to include information on human trafficking and how to spot the signs of it. WELCA members from around the state were very active in advocating for this bill.