

Human trafficking resolution— one year later

A year has passed since the Resolution Against Human Trafficking was unanimously adopted by delegates at the Columbus convention. I felt the energy of that group and the desire to add our “official” Mennonite voice to the battle against modern slavery. As important as our collective voice is, the reason which compelled me to bring this issue to the MW USA board was the need for our individual efforts.

Those who are fighting this crime are calling on faith communities, medical and social services providers, and law enforcement to learn the signs of enslavement. Identifying victims of human trafficking requires everyday people who know what the indicators are and who to call (888-3737-888) if they suspect someone is enslaved. (See <www.MennoniteWomenUSA.org/resources>). Mennonite Women USA has presented several seminars providing education on human trafficking.

At a Mennonite Health Assembly workshop I was joined by Janet Olson, Executive Director of Arizonans for the Protection of Exploited Children. (See <www.protectchild.org>). Janet brought the compelling story of her work to begin Natalie’s House, a home for eight girls, ages 11–17, rescued from sexual exploitation and abuse who need to be in a “safe house.” Janet described the need for 24-hour staffing and an on-site school at the house. She said, “If the girls go into the regular school system, they may feel unwelcome and it puts them at greater risk.” Janet’s presentation followed my listing of the signs of trafficked persons. As I listened, I was deeply moved by the enormity of the task not only of identifying survivors, but of providing communities where healing can happen.

The question facing Mennonite Church USA after this first year is how we as a denomination follow up on resolutions. **Who will continue to focus the issue of human slavery for the church, and help connect with interrelated issues of economics and immigration?** An excellent Bible study resource, “Let My People Go,” is now available from Mennonite Church USA at <www.Mennonite-USA.org/>, then click on Delegate Actions. If you wonder where to begin in responding to human trafficking, this Bible study discussion is a good place to start. 📷



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Janet Olson shares about Natalie’s House