

by Biz Staff

THE Presentation SISTERS:

Providing Light, Hope & Help wherever they go

"Jane" thought she was traveling to South Dakota to work at a hunting lodge. Instead she was forced into prostitution.

A dairy worker was injured after 5 days of work. The farmer fires him without paying him, and as an undocumented immigrant, he has no legal recourse to get back pay.

"Johnny" got in trouble with the law and now sits on death row. Every day he regrets his actions and has given his life to Christ, but every day he's one day closer to execution.

These are examples of stories that depict the work of the Presentation Sisters. Each day the Sisters live out their mission of providing hope, help and a light in the darkness to those who have lost their way.

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From left to right:
Sister Gabriella Crowley,
Sister Kathleen Bierre,
Sister Pat Prunty



BIZ NOW visited with the newly formed Presentation Sisters Justice Commission, which is comprised of Sister Gabriella Crowley of Sioux Falls and Sisters Pat Prunty and Kathleen Bierne of Aberdeen.

The mission of the group focuses on three areas of social justice:

- 1. Right Relationships** (human trafficking, immigration, death penalty)
- 2. Peacemaking** (anti-nuclear, prayer vigils)
- 3. Care for Creation / Earth Sustainability** (green living, recycling, renewable energy)

Trafficking isn't always about sex; it's also about unfair and cheap labor practices. "Workers might not have full citizenship so employers can refuse to pay them. Or they may be a day laborer who gets injured on the job, and without a contract, has no recourse," says Sister Kathleen.

The Sisters also strive for prison reform and have spoken publicly against the death penalty. Some of the Sisters visit prisoners, where they witness God's loving presence for all people. "I was drawn to this ministry when I was able to persuade a young man to give himself up after committing a major crime. I continued to visit him as he served his seventeen year prison sentence," says Sister Pat.

The Sisters' efforts regarding right relationships focus on awareness and education, from sponsoring seminars on anti-trafficking to writing letters to legislators and educating the public.

RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

Right relationships include respecting the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. The main emphasis this year includes the abolition of the death penalty and human trafficking.

The anti-trafficking issue is very prominent in our state right now. According to Police Records, in the last two years 78 people have been arrested in connection with sex-related crimes in Sioux Falls. Twice a year South Dakota sees a spike in trafficking - during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and during the hunting season. "There's trafficking throughout our state, in large cities and on the Reservations as well. Parents are told they need workers in the hunting lodges, but they don't define the work, and the girls often end up being forced into sex trafficking," remarks Sister Kathleen. Sister Gabriella adds, "We know that trafficking happens with children and teens, and often occurs where money is involved. There is a safe house in Aberdeen and we work with local groups in Sioux Falls to make sure people are safe."

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PEACEMAKING

The Sisters participate in various peacemaking activities throughout the year. Some of these activities include prayer vigils at the scene of a violent crime, rallies at military bases and they assist in sponsoring the annual Pax Christi Conference in eastern South Dakota.

Peacemaking also includes educating people and advocating against the use of nuclear weapons. They work with refugees from all over the world who have experienced violent situations in their home countries and provide immediate assistance. The Presentation Sisters serve and minister to those in need locally, nationally and worldwide and remember all people in their daily prayers.



CARE FOR CREATION / EARTH SUSTAINABILITY

Care for Creation has been a concern for many years. "We're trying to model a green lifestyle at our convent. We have an 80-foot wind turbine that has been a great addition to the property in Aberdeen. We also have 125 solar panels installed on the roof of one of our buildings, which alleviates 10 – 20 % of our utility bill," says Sister Kathleen.

The Sisters encourage everyone to consider how resources are used in their daily lives. It can be as simple as starting a recycling program, using more earth friendly cleaning supplies, adding solar panels to your property or even looking at one's financial investments. The Presentation Sisters work with their investors and other entities to promote socially responsible investing. This means they look for money managers who share their values regarding justice. "Together, we can become better stewards of the earth," says Sister Kathleen.

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST

Please email: wepray4u@presentationisters.org.
For information or to make a donation to the Presentation Sisters, please contact Brooke or Jen at 605.271.0468 or visit www.presentationisters.org



The Sisters go Green: solar panels on a building at the Presentation Heights in Aberdeen and a wind turbine help reduce energy costs.

Historically, the Presentation Sisters originated in Cork, Ireland in 1775.

Their foundress, Nano Nagle, who was born into a wealthy family, felt a calling to educate children and help the sick and poor. Sacrificing everything, she secretly started schools; at night she would take her lantern, and going into the streets, began her ministry. From here, the Presentation Congregation was started.

The Sisters continued Nano's vision as they traveled across the world in 1880, at the invitation of Bishop Martin Marty, to teach the children of the Lakota people and French settlers in Dakota Territory. In 1886, Father Robert Haire extended an invitation to start Sacred Heart School in Aberdeen, soon the Sisters were staffing parish schools around the Diocese of Sioux Falls.

When a diphtheria epidemic struck the Aberdeen area in 1900, the Sisters were asked to care for the sick. In 1901, they began a healthcare ministry in Aberdeen. Today, they currently co-sponsor the Avera Health System with the Benedictine Sisters of Yankton.

Since this time, the Sisters have continued to expand both their education and healthcare ministries and adapted them to meet the needs of people. Over the years many things have changed in religious life, but the Sisters have remained rooted in their mission of service.

"We, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Aberdeen, South Dakota, are a vowed faith community who share the mission of Jesus. Inspired by our foundress, Nano Nagle, we willingly go forth to any part of the world to work for justice, alleviate oppression and promote human dignity, especially among the poor. We proclaim the Good News with missionary zeal, in a spirit of love and joy." ♦