



Dear Susquehanna Church Family,

I am writing to ask you to consider inviting your church this year to participate in Peace with Justice Sunday, one of the six special offerings of the United Methodist Church. This year the offering will be collected on June 11th, 2017, though you are welcome to collect it any time throughout the year.

What makes this particular Sunday so special is that fifty percent of all fund collected are dispersed right here in the Susquehanna Annual Conference in the form of grants for local churches reaching out to their communities to bring justice and peace.

Let me share the story of one of our grant recipients: ***Open Your Eyes: A symposium raising awareness of child sexual exploitation***, organized by the North Central Human Trafficking Response Team (NCHTRT) Faith Committee, held back-to-back symposium. We were very thankful to receive a Peace with Justice grant award to help offset speaker expenses.

As January is Human Trafficking Awareness month, we wanted to provide, encouragement to the entire faith community, as well as the reasons, responsibilities, and responses to combat child sexual exploitation. The US Justice Department estimates that close to 300,000 American youth are currently at risk for becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Many of these children live at home – in plain sight, as did the symposium's keynote speaker, Jen Spry, RN. Following the symposium's conclusion at 2:00 pm, each attendee was invited to join the free Mandated Reporter Training, from 2-4 pm. Each person who completed this training received a five-year certification.

We were very heartened by the number of attendees (about 150 over the two days). The vast majority were not affiliated with any governmental agency. Some were clergy, but the majority were simply people taking time from their schedules and for some time off from work to learn more about trafficking, specifically sex trafficking of minors.

The overall impression given by the attendees was positive. Most learned how pervasive this slavery is and now have resources to help them in identifying possible sex-trafficking and where to report those activities.

I would hope that you will partner in special ministries like these. Just imagine what we could do right here in Pennsylvania if only each of your congregants worshipping on PWJ Sunday would give even \$1.00.

Remember to apply for a grant if your church is doing ministries related to peace and justice!

Blessings,

Rev. Michelle Bodle

PWJ Coordinator for the Susquehanna Annual Conference

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<http://www.umcgiving.org/ministry-articles/peace-with-justice-sunday>