

Talking Points

Wisconsin Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

WCHHSM is made of nine agencies that deliver health and human services to a diverse population. All of these Wisconsin agencies are members of the national Council for Health and Human Service Ministries of the United Church of Christ, which is often called CHHSM (rhymes with prism). CHHSM has an excellent web site chhsm.org.

Although today we refer to these agencies as doing service ministries, many of us remember when they were referred to as our *diakonal ministries*. Diakonal comes from the Greek word diakonos, which means servant. As our UCC Statement of Faith expresses, “God calls us into the Church...to be servants in the service of others. Our service ministries grew out of this commitment to serve others as an expression of our Christian faith.

The Wisconsin Conference has a special covenantal relationship with the nine agencies of WCHHSM. Indeed we think of ourselves as “partners in mission” with these member organizations. Through both the Conference and the local Wisconsin church, we offer support, encouragement, prayer and financial resources to these agencies.

The nine agencies that make up WCHHSM are the following.

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Back Bay Mission | 7. Orion Family Services |
| 2. Cedar Community | 8. Park’s Edge Preschool |
| 3. Crossroad | 9. Retirement Housing Foundation |
| 4. Emmaus Homes | Monona Meadows |
| 5. Fairhaven Senior Services | Richardson Manor |
| 6. New Glarus Home | Round House Manor |
| | Valley View Apartments |

The earliest health and human service institution within our Wisconsin boundaries was Sunburst. This mission began as the Winnebago Indian Mission in Black River Falls in 1878 and was a part of the work of the Reformed Church. Sunburst helped many children and was loyally supported by our churches for its whole history. When it closed Orion Family Services, whose home offices are in Madison, continued our ministry of help for troubled children and families. Orion’s programs focus on abused and neglected children and delinquent youth. Services include group and foster home care and family therapy services to families in their homes and a range of other critical outreach services. They currently work with over 350 children and 110 families annually. Their clients are spread out over 10 counties in Wisconsin.

Cedar Community began in 1953 when a bachelor farmer donated his family homestead in the West Bend area to the church to begin an educational, retreat program and a home for the aging. On the donated farm land the former South Wisconsin Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church started the Cedar Lake Home. Today Cedar Community has multiple campuses and is the nation’s 92nd largest not-for-profit continuum of care provider for the elderly and their families. In their long history, they have had only two directors, a tangible sign of the commitment Cedar Community engenders!

Fairhaven was founded in 1960 by the Congregational Christian Conference of Wisconsin and has also grown to offer a continuum of care to seniors. The third United Church of Christ facility in Wisconsin to care for the elderly is the New Glarus Home. It was started in 1966 and was a joint project of the Village of New Glarus and the Wisconsin Conference. The village of New Glarus donated 17 acres of land and the first building was built using seed monies provided by Cedar Lake Home (now known as Cedar Community).

We are privileged to have three of the finest senior care facilities in the country all located here in Wisconsin. They are all three affiliated with the United Church of Christ and members of WCHHSM.

When the early congregations of the former Evangelical Synod of North America were formed in this country, they founded children's homes, old folk homes, hospitals and homes for the handicapped, as they had known in the old country. The same situation was true of the former German Reformed Church; they too formed benevolent institutions similar to what they knew at home. When the merger that formed the United Church of Christ became effective in Wisconsin in 1962, it was agreed that the new Wisconsin Conference would continue to support the educational and benevolent institutions of each of the constituent denominations. At that time this included three institutions that were located outside the state of Wisconsin: Crossroad, Emmaus Homes and Lifelink.

Emmaus Homes was founded in 1893 by the German Evangelical Synod of North America to provide care for both children and adults with developmental disabilities. Following a successful beginning in Marthasville MO, a second campus was opened in St. Charles MO in 1901. Today Emmaus serves over 300 clients between its two campuses and in 35 homes spread across Eastern Missouri.

Crossroad was founded in 1883 - more than 125 years ago - by the German Reformed Church in the United States. For many years, they were known as the Fort Wayne Children's Home. The agency has evolved over the years along with the changing needs of children. Today, Crossroad is a treatment provider for severely emotionally troubled youth ages 6 - 21. All too often they are children who have been hurt the worst by the people who should have protected them the most. They are often children with multiple complicated diagnoses. Crossroad serves around 70 children at any given time in residential services and many more young people and families in non-residential services. Crossroad creates promising futures for children --- whatever it takes!

Lifelink traces its roots back to 1895 when the German Evangelical Orphanage and Old People's Home (later Bensenville Home Society) was established in Bensenville IL. From 1895 through 2010 when it was closed, the churches of the Wisconsin Conference supported its work.

In 1977 some folks suggested that the Wisconsin Conference UCC discontinue our special relationship and support of the out-of-state agencies we support. At the annual meeting that year the Conference voted overwhelmingly to continue to support these ministries. However, there are two levels of membership in WCHHSM. Those with corporate headquarters in Wisconsin are called Recognized Ministries and those whose corporate offices are outside Wisconsin are called Special Mission Relationship Ministries.

Retirement Housing Foundation is a nationwide organization founded in 1961 by three United Church of Christ individuals. They are committed to providing housing options to the elderly, economically disadvantaged families and persons with disabilities and put a priority on providing housing environments that enhance the quality of life for their residents on a physical, emotional and spiritual basis. Today they operate 155 communities across the country and we are lucky enough to have four RHF communities in Wisconsin: Monona Meadows in Monona, Richardson Manor in Milwaukee, Round House Manor in Kaukauna and Valley View Apartments in Manitowoc.

Back Bay is the newest member of WCHHSM having joined in 2004. Back Bay Mission was founded in 1922 as an outreach effort of the First Evangelical Church of Biloxi to serve the poor "fisher folk" living in deplorable conditions along the Back Bay of Biloxi, Mississippi. Since then, Back Bay Mission has continually grown its services and ministries, always keeping the impoverished and marginalized at the center of its concern. Although there are no longer any UCC congregations in Biloxi or in the state of Mississippi, Back Bay Mission continues to serve the poor of the area and witness on behalf of the United Church of Christ. They are presently playing a vital role in the recovery efforts of the Mississippi Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina. Many work camps from Wisconsin go down to Back Bay to help in their rebuilding efforts.

Shortly after Fred Trost became Conference Minister of the Wisconsin Conference, he related the following story. When officials of the Bensenville Home Society (later Lifelink) razed an old building in Chicago that had housed the frail elderly, inside the corner stone they found a slip of paper that said, "Unsere Liebe von Christus hat uns gezwungen". This translates as, "The love of Christ compels us!" This is what is behind all of the agencies that make up the Wisconsin Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.

Web Sites of Interest

www.cedarcommunity.org
www.chhsm.org
www.thebackbaymission.org
www.crossroad-fwch.org
www.fairhaven.org

www.emmaushomes.org
www.rhf.org
www.wcucc.org
www.orionfamilyservices.org

And the King will answer them; "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

Matthew 25:40