

Profile in Mercy: Sister Jeanne Christensen

"I would not be the person I am today without the Sisters of Mercy," says Sister Jeanne Christensen of Omaha, Nebraska. Jeanne was a shy child. One would never guess that now about this nationally recognized leader in anti-trafficking advocacy.

Jeanne is one of 15 women religious founders and a current board member of U.S. Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking, a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages efforts to eradicate the exploitation of persons. As a member of Talitha Kum International, the group connects to a global network of women religious working to end human trafficking.

Jeanne entered the community fresh out of high school in 1961. "That was when things really began changing," she said referring to Vatican II, the church and religious life. Oftentimes people would ask her, "Why did you enter?" then eventually, "Why did you stay?" Her reply? "There is no magic answer. I entered/stayed by the Grace of God...and the grace to persevere." Jeanne credits good mentors along the way, many of whom were Sisters of Mercy, as well as her continual desire to learn while graciously realizing when it is best to "hand-off" a ministry.

Jeanne's first ministry was teaching upper elementary students. "I didn't want to be a teacher," she admits. Yet she learned how thanks to Sister Charlene Ross. Jeanne taught for nearly 10 years in Kansas City, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; and Omaha.

At the tender age of 28, Jeanne's community elected her to the Omaha Provincial Leadership Team. Here she credits Sister Beatrice Marie Costello as her mentor. During this time, Jeanne quickly learned about cultural differences in community life and the diversity of sisters' ministries, due especially to the vast geography of the province. She also learned business and financial responsibilities and strategies.

"Omaha Province was much larger than Omaha!" Jeanne says. It consisted of 13 foundations from California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Oregon, with sisters and associates ministering and living in 23 states and Mexico.

Affordable housing next piqued Jeanne's interest. In the early-1980s, she learned firsthand about property management at Ecumenical Housing Production Corporation in St. Louis, Missouri, and then went on to serve as a regional coordinator for Mercy Housing based in Kansas City, under the guidance of mentor Sister Terese Tracey, among others.

With the skills Jeanne learned through teaching, serving on leadership, and navigating housing/social services, her next logical ministry was to step formally into the ministry of justice. She has been a justice advocate since 2000 when the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph hired her as their director of peace and justice, in which she was an advocate for victims of sexual abuse. She later served on the West Midwest Justice Team.

Every ministry step Jeanne has taken has led to her current role with U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking. "I am constantly learning," Jeanne says.



Craft night at [Amethyst Place](#), where families come to heal, was one of Sister Jeanne Christensen's favorite activities she helped organize while living in Kansas City, Missouri.



Sister Jeanne Christensen (left) with Kris Wade, executive director and co-founder of the [Kansas City Justice Project](#), at Missouri State Capitol for Human Trafficking Education Day.