

Rev. Karen Ingvoldstad: Retired Hospice chaplain, RN, certified in Parish Nursing and Critical Incident Stress Management and Debriefing, Level 3 Healing Touch Practitioner, Alinsky-trained Community Organizer

At Cook County School of Nursing, at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, my education encompassed medicine, nursing, diversity, poverty, and working together. Following graduation, I became a VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America], serving in Buckley, WA, and later in the American Virgin Islands. I taught in both places and helped run a health post on the island of St. John. Following this, I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Arenopolis, Mato Grosso, Brazil, doing community organizing and working in a health post. These choices were gifts that directed my future life choices. The health of society, its people, and organizations has been my focus, urging me to work for justice in various arenas, either as a volunteer or staff person. I am grateful for the many opportunities life has afforded me.

As a Manifesto committee member of the American Lutheran Church, SE Wis. Synod, I worked with congregations, encouraging them to be involved in justice issues. These included nuclear weapons, racism, hunger, peace, poverty, and women's rights. Traveling to Braunschweig, W. Germany, I spoke in churches, schools, and with the bishop of the synod in support of his clergy protesting German nuclear weapon sites. The Lutheran World Federation sent me to Estonia, Moscow, Warsaw, and E. Germany to speak with churches and small groups. This was before the Berlin Wall came down.

From its inception, I volunteered with Central City Churches in Milwaukee, chairing their Transient Task Force, which focused on food pantries, homelessness, transportation for workers, and other issues for folks coming to our churches. I was a cabinet member of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, initiating their Peace and International Issues Committee. I also chaired the Sherman Park Education committee, working for fair integration of our schools and carrying out community programs for children such as Bikes and Bullies. I successfully chaired two school programs for building playgrounds, working with the federal government HUD office, the city of Milwaukee, the schools, and Milwaukee Public Schools. Lutheran Human Relations hired me to organize the Lutheran Churches of N. America in support of Indigenous people around the Columbus Quincentenary. This was successful.

As an RN, I supported my nonprofessional coworkers in organizing a union. When we lost our jobs, I encouraged a lawsuit we won. Working to end gun violence, I created a program called The Children's Crusade for a Safer America. Many schools and churches participated. Detroit found me as a Parish Nurse in four congregations, engaged in 4 Units of CPE, chairing the ELCA Parish Nurses and a committee on the Environment. Syracuse found me working with the Red Cross doing debriefings following 9/11, a local train wreck, and adjunct chaplaincy. I also helped support the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy following threats to their lives at Thanksgiving.

My career ended in Neshkoro, WI, as a hospice nurse, perinatal loss Coordinator, and later, following ordination, as an Interfaith Minister and Hospice Chaplain. Volunteering found me at Waushara County Jail with female prisoners, volunteering with Head Start, serving on a CISM team, and successfully placing a resolution to end Citizens United on the ballot, which passed. Back in Milwaukee, I volunteer with Wisconsin for Environmental Justice as one of its co-founders and as a tutor at Starns School. My husband, Bob Hanson, and I have five children, 12 grandchildren, and almost two great-grandchildren.

