

PRIORITY ISSUE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

“And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, ‘No my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Since this man is my guest, do not do this vile thing. Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing.’ But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine, and put her out to them. They wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night.”—JUDGES 19:23-26

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

... is the second largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world. About 21 million children and adults worldwide are currently in forced labor, bonded labor and forced prostitution. In the United States, 244,000- 325,000 American youth are at risk, while 14,500–17,500 individuals are trafficked into the U.S. from other countries. Globally, an average of three people become victims of human trafficking for every 1,000 individuals. The number of people trafficked per 1,000 is highest in central and south-eastern Europe at 4.2 per 1,000 persons, but more than half of all human trafficking victims are in Asia.

DEFINITION AND ROOT CAUSES

U.S. federal law defines victims of human trafficking as anyone who is coerced or deceived into commercial sex acts and anyone forced into different forms of “labor or services,” such as domestic workers held in the home or farmworkers forced to labor against their will. Globalization has created situations of economic hardship that lead many to take desperate measures to improve their economic conditions. At the same time, it has generated excessive wealth for others that makes the sale, purchase and exploitation of human beings for both pleasure and profit possible. This creates a terrible consequence for victims in search of a better life. In many parts of the world, women and children are trafficking’s chief victims. Victims of human trafficking can be landscaping and agricultural workers, panhandlers, day laborers, factory and sweatshop workers, hotel workers and housekeepers. Victims can be found on internet sites for adult services. The commercial sex industry relies heavily on human trafficking. Many prostitutes, strippers, escorts and workers in massage parlors, brothels and for phone chat lines are victims of human trafficking.

THE VISION

We believe that our ministry of reconciliation requires us to work towards ending human trafficking and to minister to the immediate needs of those who live in the fear, loneliness and physical pain that accompany human trafficking, offering hope and help to escape.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012, Resolution 161, states that United Methodists “deplore all forms of the commercialization and exploitation of sex, with their consequent

cheapening and degradation of human personality. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation or use of children by adults and encourage efforts to hold perpetrators legally and financially responsible.”

We must work for a justice system that restores victims and punishes perpetrators, but we must also work to change the global economic conditions and policies that create the conditions in which trafficking can thrive.



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