

January
2017

Prayer Service for an End to Human Trafficking

Setting: On a ritual table place a prayer cloth, a candle and symbols to represent the various forms of human trafficking.

Opening Song: Select a song, such as *We Shall Overcome, We Are Called*.

Leader: We gather annually to remember the estimated 21 million people around the world who are trafficked in various industries. From fishermen in Thailand, to children exploited online, to migrant women trapped in domestic servitude, we remember that behind the statistics and stories of pain are also stories of resilience that give us hope.



Reader 1: At 17, Rachel was sold into sexual servitude by her boyfriend whom she met online. She did not know the term “sex trafficking” until she was 20 years old and obtained access to counseling through a resource center. Through the program, she learned that the abuse wasn’t her fault and began the process of recovery. Later, when a Georgia State Representative asked her to lend her experience and name to a bill to assist child sex trafficking victims, Rachel became a voice for thousands of children who, like her, were manipulated into sex trafficking. The Safe Harbor/ Rachel’s Law passed in the Georgia Legislature in November 2016 ensures that victims of child sex trafficking and exploitation are not charged for the crimes committed against them. Rachel says of victims like herself, “I want to give them hope. I pray that they all see something in me that will inspire them not to give up on life and to understand that sexual violence is a crime that was committed against them; they did not victimize themselves.”

—[Seventeen.com/ Circle of Friends Celebrating Life, Inc.](http://Seventeen.com/Circle of Friends Celebrating Life, Inc)

Reader 2: Rathish grew up in Tamil Nadu, Southern India in a lower caste family. Ever an advocate for justice, he spoke out against the abuse he, his family, and his friends suffered at the hands of the upper caste. Soon it became too dangerous for him to stay and he fled to the United States to seek asylum. Once in the U.S., desperate for a job, he found work in a sandwich shop, only to be forced into harsh working conditions and little pay for 14 hours a day. Soon, he escaped, but was apprehended and sent to immigration detention. After being denied pro-bono legal services, Rathish began to study immigration laws in the library at the detention center. When he came across the definition of a “T-Visa,” which allows trafficking survivors to stay in the U.S. if they testify against their traffickers, he learned the laws, advocated for a T-Visa, and got himself out of detention. Now he is on his way to obtaining his green card and acts as an advocate for other trafficking survivors in immigration detention.

—Rathish Pandian/ Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center



Courtesy of Rathish Pandian

Reader 3: A reading from Galatians, “There is neither slave nor free person...for you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28).

Leader: We find hope in survivors’ stories of resilience and how far we have come in the effort to bring awareness to the issue of human trafficking. We ask God to give us the strength and courage to continue this work until all victims are free.

All: God, we are all one in your name. Bless those that still live in exploitation, and give us the strength and hope to further our efforts to end human trafficking.

Leader: We pray for those who come to our country as immigrants in search of economic opportunity, but out of desperation take a job that forces them into situations of exploitation.

All: There is no slave or free person, we are all one in God’s name.

Leader: We pray for all in forced labor, including those who are trafficked overseas, many of whom are part of the process to create our favorite products.

All: There is no slave or free person, we are all one in God’s name.

Leader: We pray for women, children and men who are exploited for their bodies on the streets or internet.

All: There is no slave or free person, we are all one in God’s name.

Leader: We pray for the traffickers and those who benefit from exploitation, may they have a conversion of heart that leads them to release those they have enslaved.

All: There is no slave or free person, we are all one in God’s name.

Leader: Let us take a few moments to think about one way we will commit to furthering our efforts to end human trafficking. [Quiet Reflection]

Leader: I invite those that wish to share to do so now. [Sharing]

All: God of wisdom, allow us to see ourselves reflected in the stories of human trafficking victims. Let us give voice to survivors’ stories, and find hope in their resilience. Guide us in ending the demand for cheap products and sex, and protect those who are still trapped in situations of exploitation. Amen.

Take Action:

- For educational resources visit www.ipjc.org or www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org
- Join or start a monthly human trafficking vigil to raise awareness: www.ipjc.org
- If you suspect human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1.888.373.7888

