

# Prayer Service for an End to Human Trafficking

**Setting:** Put on the ritual table a cloth and four candles. As each story is read, light a candle as a sign of hope for those who are trafficked and enslaved.

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

**Leader:** On the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State...shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.

—Abraham Lincoln, *Emancipation Proclamation*

**Reader 1:** For 150 years, the United States has promised freedom and liberty. Yet, we know that people are still enslaved within our borders.

**Reader 2:** Human trafficking and slavery are illegal in every country, but present in every nation on Earth.

**Leader:** Let us take a moment of silence in solidarity with those who suffer from human trafficking and modern day slavery.

[*Moment of Silence*]

**Leader:** Let us join together in the words of the psalm:

**All:** The just cry out, and God hears them and saves them from all their troubles. God is close to the brokenhearted and rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

—Psalm 34: 17-18

## Stories

**Leader:** Each person forced into slavery has a unique story. As we reflect on freedom during this 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, let us listen to stories of survivors of human trafficking.

**Reader 1:** Natalia was born in Ghana but moved to the United States to go to school. The family she was living with abused her and forced her to care for the house and their three children. Natalia worked for 18 hours a day without pay. One day, after being beaten, she escaped and sought help from the police.

**Reader 2:** Joel and Ronival were enslaved on a Brazilian ranch for 10 years. They were forced to bathe in a reservoir contaminated with cattle manure, and they slept in a wooden hut. Eventually, they left the ranch in the middle of the night. Because of their courage, Joel and Ronival obtained compensation from their traffickers and have restarted their lives.

**Reader 1:** Nayantara met a labor broker at a carpet factory in Nepal. He promised her a good job as a domestic worker in Lebanon. Instead he took her to India and sold her to a brothel where she was forced to have sex with at least 35 men each day. Eventually, she ran away and is now in a refuge in Nepal.

**Reader 2:** Antonio cared for his parents and five younger siblings in Mexico. Promised a lucrative construction job in California, he moved to the United States. Instead, he was taken to Florida and forced to work in the tomato fields. Antonio was locked in a shack with the other workers at night and only allowed outside when it was time to work in the fields.



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**Leader:** Let us take a moment of silence to reflect on these stories.

*[Moment of Silence]*

**Response Prayer:** Natalia, Joel, Ronival, Nayantara and Antonio all escaped and found freedom. We rejoice in their hope and pray for the liberation of all peoples who are trafficked around the world.

**Leader:** For the estimated 27 million women, men and children currently held in slavery-like conditions. May freedom be restored to those who have been bought, sold or kidnapped for the monetary benefit of others.

**Response:** Bring them hope and freedom

**Leader:** For those in bonded labor, in agricultural fields, mines and factories, who have been reduced to tools of production, commodities rather than human beings.

**Response:** Bring them hope and freedom

**Leader:** For those who cannot return home due to the stigma of prostitution, disease or shame, that they may receive the solace, healing and support they need.

**Response:** Bring them hope and freedom

**Leader:** For those forced to become soldiers, made into tools for violence. In particular, we pray for child soldiers in South Sudan.

**Response:** Bring them hope and freedom

**Leader:** For children exploited and objectified in the commercial sex industry, that they may be free to play, learn and grow up in freedom and safety.

**Response:** Bring them hope and freedom

**Leader:** Let's take a few moments of quiet to consider: what one action can I take to stop the demand for human trafficking and create a world that values the dignity of human life.

*[Moments of Silence]*

**Leader:** I invite those who wish to briefly share one action s/he will take to stop the demand for human trafficking. Our response to each person's sharing will be: We act for justice.

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All:** God of hope and freedom, inspire us to act for justice and bring an end to human trafficking. Help us build a world where all are free to live with dignity.

### **Take Action:**

- ☞ Learn about the local and global reality of human trafficking.
- ☞ Pray for an end to human trafficking. Join or start a monthly vigil on the 1st Sunday of the month.
- ☞ Demand slave-free products. Buy fair trade when possible.
- ☞ Advocate for state and federal legislation that protects victims and prevents human trafficking.

For more education and action resources, visit [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)



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