

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE SOUTH CAROLINA ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO BEGIN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Whereas, Human trafficking is defined as a modern-day form of slavery, in which victims are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services "Human Trafficking Fact Sheet"); and

Whereas, Human trafficking generates \$9.5 billion annually and is the fastest-growing type of criminal activity in the world today (U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons; The Polaris Project); and

Whereas, As many as 27 million people in the world today are victims of human trafficking (Sociologist Kevin Bales, "Disposable People"); and

Whereas, Some 600,000 to 800,000 victims are trafficked annually across international borders worldwide, with about 14,500 to 17,500 of those trafficked into the United States (U.S. Department of State); and

Whereas, An estimated 200,000 American children are at high risk for trafficking into the sex industry each year (The Polaris Project); and

Whereas, All people are created by God and in the image of God (Genesis 1:27); and

Whereas, God is a God of justice (Isaiah 61:8), who calls on His people to work for justice and to defend the oppressed (Isaiah 1:17), and blesses those who work for justice (Psalm 106:3); and

Whereas, God hears the cries of the oppressed (Psalm 10:17-18); and

Whereas, Jesus Christ defined His mission as ministering to the poor, the captive, the ill and the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19); and

Whereas, The General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church has studied the issue of human trafficking while participating in the U.N. Commission on the Status and Role of Women; and has endorsed and promoted the "Rescue and Restore" initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and has publicized the Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline: 1-888-3737-888; and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church's 2008 Book of Resolutions calls us to educate ourselves about this issue and work for its eradication; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church encourage its members and churches to join in fighting against all forms of human trafficking, in working to rescue and restore its victims, in promoting vigorous laws and prosecution of perpetrators, and in working to reduce the demand for trafficked persons. And be it further

Resolved, That the following action steps are suggested:

- Educate yourself and others. Resources include the following:
U.S. State Dept. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons: www.state.gov/g/tip
U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services: www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women: www.catwinternational.org/
The Polaris Project: www.polarisproject.org/ ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
Not For Sale: www.notforsalecampaign.org/
- Pray for victims to be freed and restored, for demand to be reduced, and for perpetrators to stop their evil deeds.
- Work with other churches and denominations in supporting the provision of safe houses for victims of human trafficking.
- Call on all people to recognize their particular responsibility to raise awareness of the issues involved in human trafficking.
- Observe the "National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness" on the Sunday before January 11 each year.
- Identify advocacy groups and consider contributing financially to the work of freeing victims of human trafficking.
- Determine what services are available locally for runaway teens (who are particularly vulnerable to traffickers) and how you can support these services.

*Submitted by The Board of Church and Society
Mary Lynn Polk, Chairperson*