

A Liturgy for Human Trafficking Awareness Day
January 10, 2016
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Reflection before worship: "One must never forget that slaves are first and foremost people. Their lives are filled with sorrow and injustice...but also...they are touched with humor and joy. Just like regular people. Just like free people." —Richard Holbrook, U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations

Call to Worship

Leader: God says to us, "Learn to do right."

People: God chooses us to preach good news to the poor.

Leader: God tells us "Seek justice, defend the oppressed."

**People: God sends us forth to announce freedom to all who are prisoners,
recovery of sight to the blind,**

Leader: God commands us "Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."

People: Set the burdened and battered free.

All: Let us worship God and pray for a hopeful tomorrow.

—based on Isaiah 1:17 and Luke 4: 16-20

Call to Confession

There are almost 21 million people around the world who are victims of human trafficking: 68% in forced labor, 26 % are children and 55% are female. Let us together ask for God's forgiveness for the times we have not sought justice and defended the oppressed.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Lord, we confess that we don't see them—those who are enslaved in forced labor in the factories, fields and brothels. You see them. Heal our blindness so that we can see those who are desperate and vulnerable to exploitation.

We confess we don't hear the cries of those whose bodies are used for sexual pleasures against their wills. You hear them. Unplug our ears so that we hear the cries of those in bondage.

You call us to be the voice of freedom, comfort and healing. We get overwhelmed at how much needs to be done and not enough disciples to take action. Open our hearts so that we can see the consequences of our inaction and give us courage to follow your commands. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God said, “I’ve taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey.”

—Exodus 3:7-8

Prayer for Illumination

Open our ears, O God, so that we can hear clearly your words of justice and love. Give us courage to bring justice, healing and hope to a broken world.

Prayers of the People

God, we turn to you, the one whose attention is turned to the outrageous violence that takes place on this planet—the tears of the victims, no one to comfort them; the iron grip of the oppressors, no one to rescue the victims from them.

We pray for governments who ignore slave trade, corporations and industries who benefit from human beings being reduced to commodities and tools of production.

Jesus Christ, as the Suffering Servant you know violence, humiliation and rejection.

Comfort those who suffer, are afraid and alone; those who are too ashamed to come home and their families who don’t know where their loved ones are.

Holy Spirit, be with us as we fast for those who were sold into slavery today, the kidnapped children turned into child soldiers, those trapped in the sex trade at truck stops and strip clubs and those forced into domestic servitude.

We pray for a hopeful tomorrow.

We pray for all traffickers around the world and those who profit from their works of evil. Open their hearts and minds to the cruelty and abuse they inflict every day.

Lord, make your presence known to them and lead them down the path of your righteousness. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

Go out into the world, break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, and cancel debts. Share your food with the hungry, invite the homeless poor into your homes, put clothes on the shivering ill-clad. May the God of all love and grace give you peace. Amen.

—based on Isaiah 58: 6-7