

Human Trafficking Awareness Day

January 11, 2017

What is human trafficking?

- Human trafficking is a crime. It is a modern-day form of slavery in which victims are compelled, defrauded or coerced into forced labor, child soldiery or commercial sex against their will.

Who are the victims?

- Victims may be children or adults, female or male, educated or illiterate, rich or poor, citizens or not, urban or rural – or anywhere in between. The only common element is that people caught in trafficking have been stripped of their freedom.

How can we help stop it?

- **Pray.** Plan an observance or vigil at your church or collaborate with nearby congregations.
- **Educate.** Observe National Human Trafficking Day on January 11 and continue to lift up the topic throughout the year.
- **Connect.** Host an informational forum and invite neighboring congregations, civic organizations and elected officials.
- **Act.** Find out about the situation in your area. Join advocacy organizations that address the issue, such as ELCA World Hunger, which addresses causes of trafficking. Support agencies that combat trafficking and those that serve survivors or people at risk, such as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. Post the phone number of the National Human Trafficking Hotline where vulnerable people may see it: **1-888-373-7888**.

Where can we learn more?

- **Women of the ELCA** has been an integral part of this church's work against human trafficking for years. See welca.org/humantrafficking.
- The **ELCA Justice for Women** website has many excellent resources on human trafficking and how we can work to end it. See elca.org/justiceforwomen.
- The **ELCA** has published many social statements, social messages and other teaching documents over the years about the exploitation of vulnerable people. They can be found at elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society.
- The **Journal of Lutheran Ethics** is a source of thoughtful theological reflection on this and other important topics. See elca.org/jle.
- **Cherish All Children** is an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to connect scripture and faith with service to engage people in preventing child sexual exploitation. Visit www.cherishallchildren.org to find resources to help your congregation Pray, Educate, Connect and Act – so all God's children are cherished.
- The national **Polaris Project** is a leader in the global fight against human trafficking. See www.polarisproject.org for much more information.

What number can people call for help?

- Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline toll free 24/7 at **1-888-373-7888**.
- Text **BeFree (233733)** 3 pm to 11 pm EST for help or for information.

Daniel

Daniel came to the U.S. legally to work on a farm with a crew of others who held the same type of work visa.

Before long, Daniel and the crew were working extremely long days without enough food or water. They were not paid what they had been promised and the employer verbally abused the workers constantly. Daniel even saw the employer physically assault a worker.

Why didn't they leave? The workers were afraid to leave the farm because the employer had their passports and would not give them back. Daniel explained to the National Human Trafficking Hotline that his visa was tied to his employment and if he left the farm abruptly, it might be invalid. He might never be allowed to come to the U.S. again.

Daniel and the workers decided to report their employer and the Hotline contacted federal law enforcement on their behalf. The Hotline also put Daniel and the workers in touch with a local attorney, who later told the Hotline that they had safely left the farm. The federal Department of Labor weighed in and many of the workers have at last been paid what they were owed.

Paula

Paula had been in a relationship with Justin for a few months when he began to isolate her from her friends and family. Eventually, Justin took control of all Paula's belongings, including her driver's license, phone, computer and her car. Then he forced her to "date" other men and engage in commercial sex. She stayed in this abusive situation for some time, afraid of Justin's violence and threats.

Paula eventually escaped with the help of family and friends. She told the National Human Trafficking Hotline that she had tried to report Justin to local police, but they did not understand that she had been trafficked. The Hotline put her in touch with other law enforcement agencies who were trained in human trafficking, as well as with experienced social service providers that could offer the support she needed as a survivor.

What number did Daniel and Paula call for help?

- The National Human Trafficking Hotline is toll free 24/7 at **1-888-373-7888**.
- You can also text **BeFree (233733)** 3 pm to 11 pm EST for help or information.