

## ***An Overview***

Most Americans consider slavery as a global institution to be a thing of the past. But over the last two decades a new form of slave trade has emerged here on our own soil and in 160 other countries worldwide. Driven by the global economy and fueled by all of the factors that serve to widen the gap between the privileged and the impoverished, *trafficking in persons* is flourishing. Generating nearly \$32 billion per year, human trafficking is now the second largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world.

**Human trafficking occurs when a person is recruited, transported, harbored, or maintained by means of force, fraud, threats, or coercion, for purposes of involuntary labor, debt bondage, or sexual services.** Traffickers often target people who are vulnerable: minors, the unemployed, those on the margins of society. Victims are lured by the promise of a better wage, a chance to see the world, or the prospect of a relationship. Regardless of the particular circumstances, human trafficking is always a violation of fundamental human rights. For Christians the call to end this form of exploitation is clear. We have been created in the image of God to praise and glorify our Creator and to embody the new human community in Christ – a community in which everyone has enough and no one is afraid. While we may certainly find this subject difficult to discuss, we cannot turn our backs on the millions of people who are being treated as commodities – with perhaps 50% of them being children. (The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that between 100,000 - 300,000 children are trafficked yearly on our soil.)

Confronted by the fact that North Carolina has consistently held its place among the top ten states for human trafficking, and concerned about the common misperceptions on the part of the public, representatives from churches across New Hope Presbytery have formed the **Human Trafficking Roundtable**. Our mission is first and foremost to raise awareness in the 122 churches in our bounds. We are also committed to engaging in actions of public witness and advocacy in collaboration with other groups that are working to end human trafficking in all its forms. We hope that you will join us by using the resources offered on this website to start a conversation in your church, in your family, and in your own circles of influence and concern.

Here are just a few of the ways that you can be a part of the movement to end human trafficking and change the world for good:

1. Use the **Human Trafficking Toolkit** on this website to familiarize yourself with both the facts and the myths around human trafficking.
2. Encourage your Sunday school class or small group to engage in a study. Check out the **Toolkit** and our **Resource Page** for content suggestions.
3. Support existing safe houses in our state by building relationships with their directors, by praying for the residents and staff, and by collecting items for their use.
4. Invite a speaker from a local group such as *Project Fight* (an initiative of the Salvation Army), *PATH-NC*, or the *North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking*.
5. Talk with your pastor and worship committee about opportunities to emphasize human trafficking in worship. Consider using scripture, prayers, music, dramatic readings, and bulletin inserts.
6. Help the youth in your church avoid entrapment by having open dialogue about the role of the internet and social media in human trafficking.
7. Hold businesses accountable for how their products are manufactured or grown.