

Greetings to Iowa Faith Communities;

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. As I write this letter there are an estimated 50 million people who are currently victims of human trafficking, the term used for the commercial exploitation of children and adults through force, fraud and coercion involving sex and labor. Many Iowans are simply unaware that this fastest growing criminal enterprise enslaves numerous victims across our towns, cities and rural communities. Human Trafficking is a horrific local and worldwide issue that is often overlooked and hidden in plain sight.

The North Iowa Coalition Against Human Trafficking, (NICAHT) spearheads anti-human trafficking education and interventions within 11 northern Iowa counties. There is a growing awareness and concern, sounding an alarm for our faith communities to rise up and take action combating modern day slavery. William Wilburforce, was a “modern day” Christian abolitionist of his time who fought transatlantic slavery in the late 1700-1800’s. He is remembered for many famous quotations including this one about prayer. “Of all things, guard against neglecting God in the secret place of prayer.” Wilberforce was so adamant about the influence and power of prayer that he stated slavery would never be abolished except by fervent prayers coupled with action. He called out the nation and people of faith, appealing to their collective conscience by saying, “You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know.”

Being members of the faith community, we are called to lead the charge and take a stand against human trafficking and slavery in all its forms because this is our duty and is the ethical, moral and just thing to do. We know this is also an imminent concern upon God's heart. In Christianity for instance, Jesus sought out captives, not to shame or judge them, but to set them free, regardless of what type of slavery held them in bondage.

The North Iowa Coalition Against Human Trafficking is partnering with the faith community and ministerial associations across all 99 counties in Iowa to participate in a Statewide Anti-Trafficking Day of Prayer on January 18, 2023. We are asking that you forward and circulate this appeal letter and flier to believers within your contact circle. We want this day of prayer to disrupt and tear down enemy forces that seek to steal, kill and destroy the lives of innocent children and adults across Iowa, our nation and world!

Some Iowa communities will have host locations or groups who will organize one or more prayer hours throughout the day on January 18th. People may also choose to pray privately in their homes, while driving to work or doing daily tasks. Included with this letter are some prayer points specifically for Iowa.

Melody Stone will also mail, at your request, a FREE 30 Day Human Trafficking Prayer Guide published by Shared Hope International and a companion booklet called “Slaying the Giant.” You may also wish to join Shared Hope International’s weekly online devotional during the month of January. This includes prayer requests and scripture passages posted every Wednesday throughout the month. To join the 30 Days of Prayer visit sharedhope.org/faithinaction/30daysprayer/.

Please plan to participate in Iowa’s Anti-Trafficking Day of Prayer on January 18, 2023. Please text or email Melody Stone, to let us know that you’ll be part of our 99 county statewide prayer effort. We would love to see thousands of people of faith across Iowa join forces for this urgently important day of prayer! Contact Melody at (808) 430-5710 or priariemelody@gmail.com

Thank You! Melody Stone, NICAHT, Ambassador Shared Hope International

IOWA HUMAN TRAFFICKING PRAYER GUIDE

Please feel free to pray as you feel led! These are some suggested prayer points.

1. Pray for Iowa communities to see the urgency of becoming educated about human trafficking, to mobilize and take action.
2. Pray for the protection of our youth who are often targeted and groomed in their communities and online by traffickers. Pray that parents and youth have open communication and become educated about this issue.
3. Pray for Iowa legislators and legislative action groups to promote passage of stronger human trafficking laws. *Please contact your legislators and pray for the passage of the "Safe Harbor" bill into law this legislative session. This law includes non-criminalization of victims by protecting minors entrapped in human trafficking from being charged and convicted of crimes they were forced to commit while being trafficked. It will protect them from a punitive response and direct them toward restorative and protective services.
4. Pray for victims, traffickers and buyers! They all need to be rescued from bondages and restored.
5. Pray that victims and survivors of trafficking will have the courage and opportunity to escape their trafficking situations, report to authorities and find safety and appropriate services. Pray for their healing and restoration.
6. Pray for the arrest and conviction of traffickers and buyers and for stiffer laws and penalties in Iowa.
7. Pray that people will speak out against social media platforms and cultural messages that objectify women and children, promoting pornography, abuse and commercial sexual exploitation.
8. Pray against corruption and the cartel's activities at our border and interstate highways. Pray for divine protection for victims, law enforcement and others working on the front lines.
9. Pray that social services, law enforcement, healthcare, education and other providers will work collaboratively to effectively support survivors in their healing process. Pray for integrity and high moral standards within government, state and local agencies and providers.
10. Pray that God will bring truth to light and that investigators have the tools and resources they need to prosecute criminals.
11. Pray that faith leaders would recognize that the same issues occurring in society also occur within the church. Pray that people of faith will reach out to those who are lost, broken, and searching and provide effective support and resources. Pray that faith leaders would be men and women of high moral standards and that they will provide victim centered care exercising unconditional love, patience, wisdom and discernment.
12. Pray for the safety and protection of our children's minds, bodies, hearts and spirits and that they will see their value and worth through God's eyes. Pray for protection against suicide, depression, anxiety, addictions, pornography, and any forms of abuse.
13. Pray for expanded services and resources in Iowa to help victims of sex and labor trafficking, strengthen laws and support investigations and convictions of perpetrators. Pray that our legislators and citizens in Iowa will be actively involved in combating human trafficking. We should all be involved in these efforts!

