

1 The Executive Council recommends this resolution be sent to a committee of the General Synod.

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3 **A Call to Awareness and Action**
4 **to End the Practice of Trafficking in Persons**

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6 **A Resolution of Witness**

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8 **Submitted By: Justice and Witness Ministries**
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11 **Summary**

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13 The Governing Board of the National Council of Churches, USA, approved on
14 September 22, 2008, a “Resolution on Human Trafficking” which calls upon the member
15 communions of the NCC to educate their congregations and advocate for policies that
16 will bring an end to human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons. This
17 resolution calls upon the United Church of Christ and its congregations to be part of this
18 education and advocacy effort.

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20 **Background**

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22 Human trafficking, also known as “trafficking in persons,” is the use of force, coercion, fraud or
23 abduction to exploit the person for profit. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to labor
24 and/or sexual exploitation, which may take many forms including debt bondage, commercial
25 sexual abuse of children, prostitution, pornography, bride trafficking, child soldiering, domestic
26 servitude and forced labor. Human trafficking is currently the third largest criminal industry in
27 the world today, after arms and drug dealing. It is also the fastest growing.¹
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29 According to the U.S. Department of State², approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across
30 national borders, not including the millions that are trafficked within their own countries. In the
31 U.S. alone, between 14,500 and 17,500 are trafficked each year. The International Labor
32 Organization also estimates that there are 12.3 millions people in forced labor, bonded labor,
33 forced child labor, and sexual servitude at any given time, although there are estimates ranging
34 from four million to 27 million. Trafficking in persons is also referred to as “modern day
35 slavery” since those whose labor and livelihoods are exploited are threatened with severe
36 consequences, including death, should they flee the situation.
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38 Women, children and people from poor nations are the most likely targets of human trafficking
39 around the world. In fact, the State Department estimates that more than 80 percent of trafficking
40 victims are women and girls and about 50 percent are under 18 years of age.³ Within the U.S.,
41 much of this activity is hidden from public scrutiny or ignored because of the nature of the
42 businesses that utilize trafficked persons (massage parlors, strip clubs, etc.).
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¹ http://216.128.14.181/polarisproject/trafficking_p3/trafficking.htm

² United States Department of State. (June 2007). “Trafficking in Persons Report”
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/82902.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of State. (2007).

44 In our current economic crisis, it is likely that there will be an increase in the trafficking of
45 persons as more nations and communities face economic stress.

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47 **Biblical and Theological Rationale**
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49 Trafficking in persons is a crime against humanity and ultimately a sin. Human trafficking denies
50 the values of human life, exposes victims to serious health risks, endangers the mental well-being
51 of victims and impedes the ability of victims to reach their full God-given potential. As
52 Christians, we believe that every human being is created in the image and likeness of the divine
53 Creator, of God. The prophets cried out against the exploitation of the poor and of laborers who
54 are not treated fairly and compensated justly (Job 24:1-12, for example). The United Church of
55 Christ has consistently upheld the rights and dignity of workers and of women and children,
56 believing that God calls us into community with each other as sisters and brothers, not as
57 exploiters and exploited. The violence done to the physical, psychological and spiritual
58 wellbeing of children and women who are forced into prostitution, the pornography industry, sex
59 tourism and other forms of sexploitation are violations of the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to
60 love our neighbors as ourselves. The kin-dom of God among us requires us to provide protection
61 for those most vulnerable and to seek conditions which support wholeness and health for
62 everyone.

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64 **The Resolution**
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66 **Whereas** trafficking in persons is a global, widespread and illegal practice which violates
67 basic human rights, including the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human
68 Rights, and is a sin against God,

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70 **Whereas** an estimated 14-18,000 persons are trafficked within the United States, often in
71 the communities where we live, work and worship, and

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73 **Whereas** the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA has called upon its
74 member communions to study and engage in advocacy on issues of human trafficking,
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77 **Whereas** women and children represent the largest percentage (80%) of those being
78 trafficked, and

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80 **Whereas** the United Church of Christ has longstanding commitments to ensuring the
81 basic human rights of all persons,

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83 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the Twenty-seventh General Synod of the United Church
84 of Christ encourages its members, congregations and various settings to engage in
85 education about the issue of trafficking in persons and advocacy efforts to end this
86 criminal and abusive practice.

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88 **Be it further resolved** that Justice and Witness Ministries and Wider Church Ministries
89 is requested to provide resourcing for education and advocacy, including use of the

90 National Council of Churches in the USA’s “Social Creed for the 21st Century”⁴;
91 promotion of “The Rescue and Restore Campaign,” an initiative of the US Department of
92 Health and Human Services (HHS) and Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
93 which maintains a public awareness website to combat human trafficking and a referral
94 hotline to connect victims with NGO’s in their local area⁵; work with international
95 ecumenical bodies and other agencies to bring an end to human trafficking in the United
96 States and abroad; monitoring the ongoing funding for the Trafficking Victims Protection
97 Act of 2000⁶; and

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99 **Be it finally resolved** that local congregations are encouraged to observe the Sunday
100 closest to January 11 as “Human Trafficking Awareness Day” through prayer, reflection,
101 education and actions that will assist in bringing an end to these forms of modern day
102 slavery.

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104 **Funding**

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106 Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the
107 overall mandates of the named agencies and the subject to availability of funds.

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109 **Implementation**

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111 Justice and Witness Ministries is requested to work with Wider Church Ministries to
112 implement this resolution.

⁴ *Social Creed for the 21st Century* was approved at the NCC General Assembly on November 7, 2007. (<http://www.nccusa.org/news/ga2007.socialcreed.html>).

⁵ The Rescue & Restore Campaign website offers outreach kits to educate and assist health care providers, social service providers, and law enforcement officers in their efforts to identify and help victims of trafficking (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/index.html>). Referral Hotline: 1-888-373-7888.

⁶ Bill #HR270 has been held in the Health Committee of the US House since 2007. It amends the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 to authorize trafficking victims-related appropriations for activities of (1) the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking; (2) the Secretary of Health and Human Services; (3) the Secretary of State; (4) the President; (5) the Secretary of Labor; (6) the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; (7) the Secretary of Homeland Security; and (8) the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.