

John 1:5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only she who believes that Jesus is the Son of God

It seems absurd for it to be necessary to say what should be plainly evident about the wrongs of human trafficking. Yet it is a reality in our current social fabric..

In September 2016, a group of 25 Presbyterian women traveled to the Bay Area for the USA Mission Experience. In San Francisco they visited 8 organizations, attended two church services to learn about human trafficking, domestic violence, and immigration issues. And to bring that back to us. Lucy, Judy, Kathy and I attended the USAME presentation.

Currently nearly 1/3 of Bay Area residents are immigrants from countries spanning the globe. Approximately 20% of immigrants are undocumented and along with documented immigrants make up one-third of the labor force. “Faced with a number of limitations many immigrants work where they can—often in low-paying, exploitive occupations, including construction and service industries. Human trafficking is increasingly common in restaurants, on farms and fisheries, in private homes, and of course, in massage parlors and strip clubs...” “The Bay Area has the fastest growing income inequality between wealthy and poor residents in the United States.”

“Human trafficking one of the most egregious injustices of our time.” It is a form of modern day slavery and the purpose is exploitation. It still happens on the streets but. is increasingly moving to the internet. Much of this is foreign to us as a tightly knit community but trafficking is found in all metropolitan cities. These are: custodial services, restaurants, nail salons, sales crews, construction, agriculture and skilled nursing facilities. The Bay Area Anti-Trafficking Coalition is the source of the information provided to Horizons Magazine, the magazine for Presbyterian Women, the covers of which Christine made the poster in the entry hall.

All attendants at the USAME presentation learned the red flags of a human trafficking situation. A copy of these can be made available. There are many myths and facts which may lead to confusion. Copies of these are also available. An example is: Myth: People are not trafficked within the United States. Fact: Men, Women and Children are trafficked within, to, from and through the United States.

Finally, During their visit to the San Jose Presbytery, the participants saw beautiful fields of green lettuce, spinach, green beans, artichokes, Brussels sprouts and apricots. However, some fields are dry, and not picked because there aren't enough laborers to tend and pick the harvest.

The Puente community resource center near San Mateo is in an area that employs many immigrant workers. Their program includes more than 40 education and leadership programs geared toward individuals: health and wellness, adult education, youth leadership development and employment and economic stability. Puente also is an emergency resource for rent, utilities, information, bedding, clothing and toiletries. Many of these supplies are provided by area churches. "A number of congregations have declared themselves as sanctuary churches that will support and protect youth and their families." Their method of transportation to look for jobs is the bicycle. The bike racks were always full and unlocked.

Now, back to John 1:5 "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." And, the beautiful hymn the choir sang two weeks ago, Be not afraid, I go before you always."

Thank you, Merry Lee August 2, 2017