



## Wednesday Prayer

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Walk alongside

***He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. 2 Corinthians 1:4 (The Message Bible)***

This week as I was driving, I heard a radio ad for an organization that “rescues” human trafficking victims from countries outside the United States. They must have used the term “rescue” 15 times in that short ad seeking money. It got me thinking of the times I have gently educated individuals and organizations about using this type of language, language that makes the “rescuer” feel good but may further harm the victim. From the many years Lutheran Social Service, and specifically Youth and Family Services, have worked with exploited and trafficked youth, I have learned that youth don’t want to be “rescued” by anyone. And, in fact, this may have been the wording used by their trafficker when they were being groomed.

Later in this passage from 2 Corinthians, we hear Paul talk about God rescuing us from peril, and assuring us that he will continue to rescue us again and again. This, to me, is a different type of rescue, and being from God, rather than from the hands of a human organization. What is the longer term path for the youth this organization plans to rescue? My hope is that they have professionals in place who are well positioned to walk alongside the youth, using trauma-informed care and survivor-centered services to support the long journey toward a safe and healthy future.

While speaking of language, another problematic term used by some organizations is “modern day slavery.” This presumes that slavery of our black and brown neighbors actually did cease to exist back in 1862 with the Emancipation Proclamation. So, now we see a new kind of slavery. This not only ignores the continued forms of slavery black and brown people have endured in the United States in the 158 years since that signing, but also presumes that human trafficking is some kind of new problem. Our use of language is important as we work together to right these wrongs in our country. Let’s talk about this issue using accurate terms such as sexual exploitation, sexual violence, and sex trafficking. And most importantly, let’s walk alongside youth as they determine their best path forward, supporting them on the way.

Respectful representation moves away from making individuals seem helpless and desperate for us to rescue them (our own “savior mentality”) – and moves toward empowering individuals, recognizing their full humanity and life story. Learn more about effective and respectful representation from the [Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force](#).

**Loving God, you see each one of us as we truly are, walking alongside us through all our trials and joys. Help us to do the same as we work to prevent child sexual exploitation and trafficking, opening our hearts and minds to learn and act justly. Amen**

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