

**FREEDOM
CHURCH
ALLIANCE**

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**IMPACT
REPORT**

GO DO GOOD



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



In 2020, the song “Way Maker” has become an anthem for millions of Christians around the world. The chorus says, “Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, / Light in the darkness, / My God, That is who You are” (lines 14-16). And a few verses down comes the bridge:

Even when I don't see it, You're working
Even when I don't feel it, You're working.
You never stop, You never stop working.
You never stop, You never stop working. (71-74)



I read that it has now been translated in fifty languages! What a timely song for the body of Christ. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." It is strengthening and encouraging to remember and declare the truth about God and His goodness, even if the heart is heavy and the tears are streaming. We remember that He's everything to us – essential in every way. He loves us and helps us even when times are hard and we don't know what He is doing.

So yes, it has been a year to say the least. But I want to share with you what a faithful Way Maker God has been for the Freedom Church Alliance. In times of crisis, those in vulnerable situations often become even more vulnerable. In the spring we started getting calls from multiple frontline partners asking us to help some of the amazing survivors they were working with who were starting new lives and even new jobs. Because of the shutdowns, these women could not work, leaving them in unstable conditions. Your partnership allowed us to help multiple survivors pay their rent and utilities. We were also



able to help provide groceries and other essentials. Many safe homes and shelters could not take in new clients because of COVID-19 restrictions, yet there was a steady stream of women who now had the unique opportunity to get help; these women desperately needed a place to stay. Your generosity allowed us to cover the costs of temporary housing and shelter for some of these women.

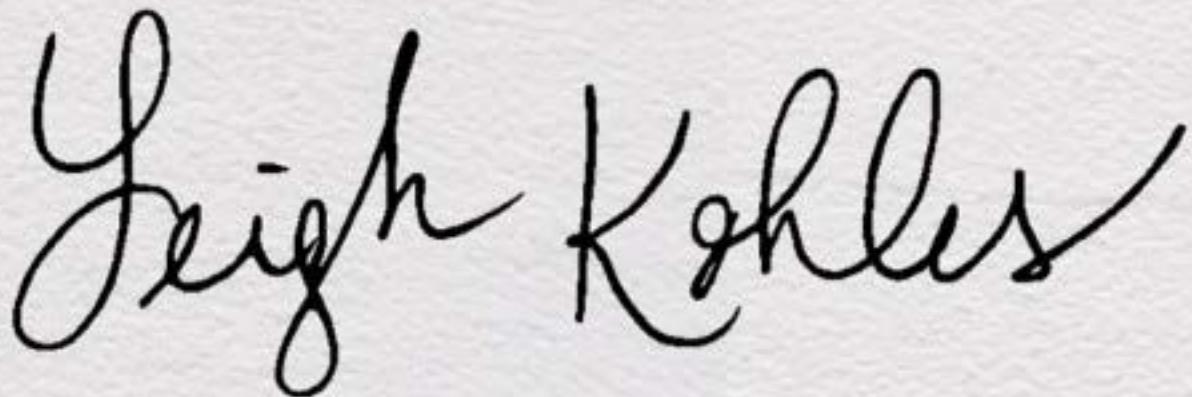
By God's grace we were also able to give more as an Alliance to frontline anti-trafficking partners in 2020 than ever before. These finances were given to twelve different partners, each filling important gaps in the landscape of the anti-trafficking movement. We were disappointed when we had to cancel our Church and Human Trafficking series in the spring, but we were amazed to discover the impact and reach we would be able to have by turning them into a 4-week zoom series in the fall.

The Freedom Church Alliance is currently thirty churches strong. We are so grateful that we could add some wonderful new congregations to our Alliance in 2020. Together, we are standing as a unified collaborative body to bring light into the



darkness of human trafficking. We declare there is a Way Maker who is moving in the world. He is changing lives and bringing hope. This Christmas as we celebrate the arrival of Emmanuel, God with us, we also celebrate the fact that He is coming again to set all things right. Until then, we keep fighting the good fight. We don't stop because He won't stop.

Wishing you a joyful Christmas and holiday season,



Leigh Kohler, President

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

*This spring we raised
and sent out over*

\$8,000

*to fund emergency needs
of the anti-trafficking
community that were
directly connected to
COVID-19.*

We helped provide



**emergency
housing**

and



food needs

*in addition to rent and
utilities for many trafficking
survivors through our
frontline partners.*



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CARING DURING COVID-19

"One survivor, with a one week old baby in her arms, ran from her pimp's house to be met with aid from our partner Rescue America who had arranged a safe pick up. She was brought to the emergency room with critical injuries and a newborn.

The Freedom Church Alliance was able to provide for her emergency housing and basic needs for her and her child as she bravely stepped into freedom."



ONLINE CLASSES

THE FREEDOM CHURCH ALLIANCE presents

THE CHURCH & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*Our online class, **The Church & Human Trafficking**, was a four week course featuring local experts.*

Its purpose was to help the Church understand what trafficking is, the **demand** for sexual exploitation, **vulnerabilities** that lead to exploitation, and hear **testimonies** from survivors who have overcome.

Countries In Attendance:



UNITED STATES



ENGLAND



BRAZIL



**483 People
Attended**

= 24 people

**Across 51
US Cities**



After attending The Church & Human Trafficking, one attendee said...

"I loved being able to learn about all the different aspects of trafficking and getting a broad overview. Hearing about each piece of the puzzle will help me determine what I can do to volunteer or help."

Countries In Attendance:

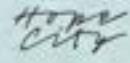


MEXICO



ROMANIA

OUR REACH



ecclesia



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*Photo taken pre-COVID-19



Kingwood United Methodist: Diving In Head-First

"What happened at Kingwood United Methodist Church after hosting a Church & Human Trafficking class can only be described as diving in head first. The months following this church-wide introduction to anti-human trafficking resulted in a deep, all-in response from the congregation lead by their passionate Mission Pastor, Chris Harrison. Volunteers came pouring in to support the front lines of anti-trafficking, tens of thousands of dollars were offered generously to meet immediate

needs, donations were collected to fill GoBags, workshops were planned, skills were offered, and the church committed to serving a local trafficking ministry, Freedom Place.



When a group of God-fearing Christ followers listen to their conviction to love the marginalized and abused, and they show up to simply offer what they have, the Kingdom of God reclaims lost territory and souls are redeemed. May we be inspired by this example and each listen to the conviction the Lord lays on our heart



The Alliance was able to collect and distribute more than 300 GoBags to frontline partners this year.

These bags, assembled by churches, offer respite care items to survivors of trafficking.

*Photo taken pre-COVID-19



GIVING & FINANCES



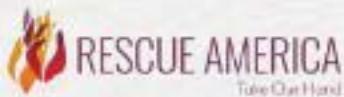
THIS YEAR WE WERE ABLE TO GRANT 11
GIFTS TO TRUSTED PARTNERS WHO WORK
TIRELESSLY ON THE FRONTLINES.



REDEEMED

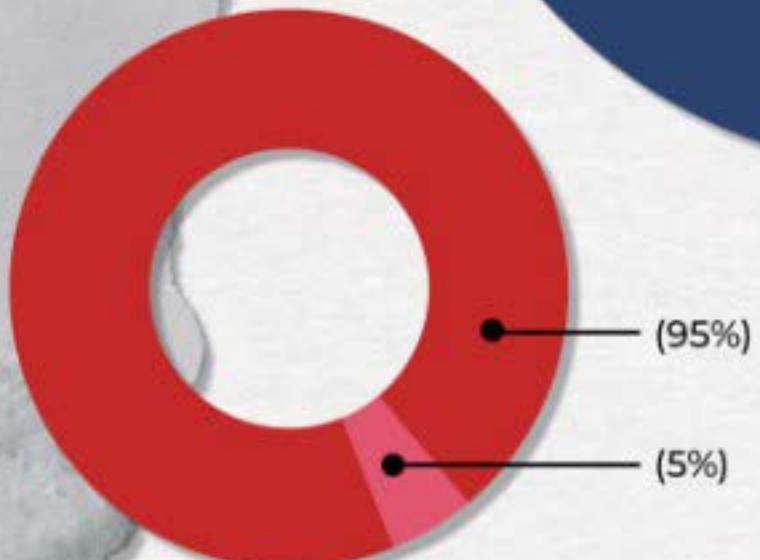
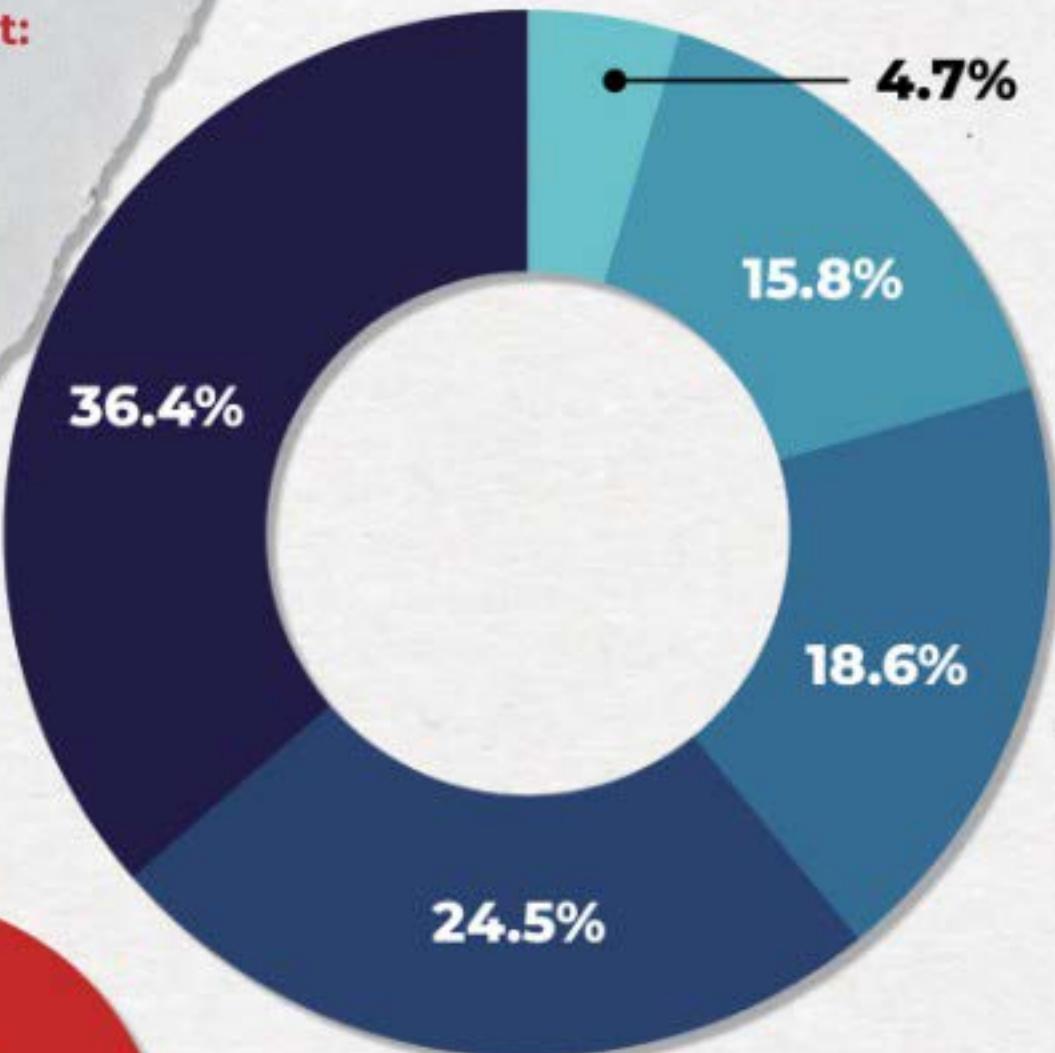
LOVE PEOPLE
NOT PIXELS

OTHELANDING



Expenses Breakout:

- Aftercare/Rehab
 - Intervention & Recovery
 - Prevention/Education
 - Demand
 - Labor Trafficking
-
- Admin & Overhead
 - Programming Costs



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LAUREN'S STORY:

FAMILIAL TRAFFICKING, REDEMPTION, AND A MESSAGE FOR THE CHURCH

On our last “Church and Human Trafficking” zoom class this fall, we read a letter from our dear friend, Lauren, who endured a lifetime of abuse and trafficking at the hands of her own father. No child should have to endure the suffering she did. But evil does not get the final chapter in Lauren’s story!

Her story is a redemption story, which she bravely shares because she is passionate about Jesus Christ and the ways He’s moved and is moving in her life and because she is dedicated to being a voice for vulnerable children who need to be seen and helped. For those of you who were not able to join us for the series, here is our brave and wonderful friend Lauren’s story.



"At 5 years old, the only word I had managed to utter was the word 'horsie'. Before 5 my voice had been silenced by a man living in my own house and my future trafficker, my father. My father began to groom me at a very early age, and in his process of grooming, he began by stripping away my ability to speak, all part of his plan to use me for his sexual pleasure and gain.

Although I cannot recall the first time I was sexually abused, my counselor and psychologist's best guess is long before the age of 5. I lived in fear, and my silence caused much concern for my teachers and doctor. Under a recommended evaluation I was labeled as having selective mutism, an anxiety disorder that prevents children from speaking in "some" settings. The difference was, I was not speaking in any setting. I was never to be evaluated further, the only solution offered was a speech therapist who came to my house to encourage me to speak. But what she did not realize is that I was being repeatedly sexually abused and was terrified to use my voice to form any type of communication. Looking back at this as an adult, I believe this was the first warning



sign that was missed. Following the years after 5, the sexual abuse continued by not only my father, but also by his friends. Upon entering school, I learned that what I needed in life I would have to steal to get. I stole books from my teacher, food from my classmates, and anything I could get my little hands on. One specific memory I have is sitting on a carpet during carpet time when a classmate communicated that he had his lunch stolen. I had stolen so much that year that the teacher in front of the entire class went to my backpack, took it out, and called me a thief. This is the second warning sign that I so clearly displayed. I was hungry all the time. I was not a child who was trying to cause trouble as she so clearly stated, but a child that was longing to feel like the other students. Longing to have food in my belly, and books in my bed.

As the school years progressed, I was introduced into the trafficking world. As the abuse intensified, so did my behavior. In 2nd grade, I would draw inappropriate body parts on my papers in school, a desperate plea for someone to take notice of me and do anything to stop the abuse. My teacher did not



ask questions, she simply told me what I was doing needed to stop or she would tell my mom. This one remark was enough to keep me silent, but my actions so clearly stated that I needed help. That same year, I began to pull my hair out in clumps specifically towards the end of the school day. A sign that showed great distress at having to return home to endure more abuse and more pain.

Year after year the abuse and trafficking continued.

My voice was silent, but through my actions I was desperately screaming for attention and help. My weight fluctuated a very noticeable amount as I dealt with the pain and anxiety of the horrors that were happening to me. I was continually scratching myself, plucking out my eyelashes, and my hair. I started asking people at school to call me different names because I no longer wanted to be Lauren. Horrendous things were happening to Lauren, so I began to create different identities to be able to separate my safe world from my scary world. My school was my safe place, a place I was guaranteed to get meals, and a place where the threats of



abuse did not exist. It was the place I went to everyday in hopes that someone would see me. Feeling unseen would be a pattern that would repeat itself throughout my childhood. I wasn't seen when I made a 0 on my spelling test (which was uncharacteristic of me), because I had been raped the night before. I wasn't seen when having to go into bars in the middle of nowhere with my dad at 9 years old, only to be trafficked in the back room. I wasn't seen when going on trips to hotels with my dad for "work", only to have men come in and out of a hotel room like a revolving door. A few times I would make intentional eye contact with people around me hoping they'd take notice and rescue me, but my best attempts failed.

My trafficking continued on and off for years. Some seasons I did not experience any at all, and some seasons felt so dark I wasn't sure I would ever come out of them. Looking back at my life now, I can so clearly see the signs that I displayed. Falling asleep in class, fearful of adults, drawing inappropriate images, panic attacks, hair pulling, constant scratching, cutting, suicide attempts, depression, withdrawing, not being



able to make eye contact with anyone in authority, looking at my dad to speak for me because I was fearful of saying the wrong thing. These were all signs that I wish someone would have been able to pick up on, signs that screamed that something was not right.

In light of all of this many have asked what they can do to help spot the signs of familial trafficking. My first answer to that question would be to pray for eyes to see. As a survivor of this type of trafficking and a former inner-city school teacher, I lived by the quote that stated that 90% of the time when you understand a story behind a kid's behavior it won't make you angry, it will break your heart. I prayed to have eyes to see past the behavior. I did my best to understand the heart behind why my students were acting the way they were acting because this is what I desperately wished someone would have done for me. I was not a bad kid; I was a hurting kid. For some kids this may be displayed through anger and rage, for others like myself, it may be withdrawing and becoming depressed. I wish someone would have taken the time to simply just see me and to establish a safe, caring relationship



with me so that I could disclose my abuse. Be a safe person for a hurting child. Secondly, believe a child when they speak. I reached out to an uncle and aunt with my very limited vocabulary to make sense of what was happening and told them things were very bad at home. They responded with, "every family is dysfunctional." I realized at that moment that no one would help me and that maybe what was happening was normal and happened to everyone.

Know the signs and symptoms of familial trafficking. If someone would have been paying attention, they would have noticed the shell of a person I became around my dad, much like a robot. I moved when he told me to move, sat when he told me to sit. My life was not my own, it belonged to him. My body language around him spoke volumes and is displayed in pictures throughout my childhood. I would lean away from him, sit as far away as possible, and freeze up when touched in any way.

Lastly, say something. I saw eyes look at me as if they knew something may not be quite right. Men coming in and out



of a hotel room with a little girl isn't right. Be vigilant and observant. Notice when something feels off or suspicious. I recently had a friend who told me that her dad told her to stay away from my dad when we were kids. I had another old family friend that sent me a message apologizing to me because I would always beg to stay the night at her house, and she would typically tell me no. She said she understands now why I asked so often and that it makes her sick to think she never put together the signs. This is a prime example of all the people that had gut feelings but did not follow through with making the report. Trust your gut. You don't have to have all the answers, but I would rather be wrong than miss the opportunity to be a voice for the voiceless and the hurting.

I was 20 and in college when I realized I was never unseen, but seen by a good, good Father who has good plans for me. A God who was angry about the pain and injustice of my story, so He sent his son to redeem it. While sitting in my Seminary class recently our professor described the definition of the word redemption that has completely changed how I view



my story. It is a word that means to buy back and to restore to original intent. While my body had been bought by many depraved men, our God sent His son to die on the cross for me, to pay for my sin and the sin done to me, to redeem me. He bought me back. A beautiful picture of the depth of love that the Father has for me. A love that has restored my life to the fullness of joy, in a way that only He could do.

To all of you who are a part of the Freedom Church Alliance, thank you for caring and for fighting this battle – it matters. God used the body of Christ to literally save my life. Through The Church I have experienced a sense of family and belonging I never had as a child. Through The Church I have been blessed with wonderful friendships and mentors. Please keep loving and wrapping your arms around the vulnerable and the hurting who need to know they are loved. Please keep being a voice for all the little Laurens out there who need your help and who need to know the saving love of Jesus."