

Let's fight real horror this Lent



The Rev Edwina Fennemore challenges us to commit ourselves to combat modern slavery

LENT provides us with an opportunity for preparation for Easter in a number of ways, mindfully reflecting upon our own lives, and others, whose lives often support ours.

This year, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's booklet message, 'Let Your Light Shine', is clear. The introductory sentence: "the gospel is God's rescue mission to bring us from darkness to light. This is the work of Jesus, the light of the world." How dark indeed is the abhorrence of modern slavery, globally, in the UK and within our neighbourhoods.

If you thought slavery was abolished 200 years ago, I'm afraid to say it still exists. Modern slavery refers to trafficking and exploitation that still traps more than 40 million people globally. It includes women forced into prostitution; children and adults forced to work in agriculture, factories or sweatshops; entire families forced to work for nothing to pay off generational debts; or girls forced to marry older men.

We have a need for the light of Christ to shine, to expose and to heal our damaged world. That's why we, as a diocese, have signed up to the national Church of England's Clewer Initiative, a three-year project that aims to

combat modern slavery. We're already working with other agencies to try to detect modern slavery happening locally and to provide care and support for victims.

The campaign slogan for the Clewer Initiative is 'We see you'. That takes on a new meaning, as we, the followers of Jesus, have a responsibility to be the light and to shine brightly in our response to this crime.

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During Lent, the Clewer Initiative is encouraging people to 'give up slavery'. Those who have signed up are being given a challenge each week during Lent to examine something about their own lifestyle. If you haven't yet, you can still follow it on social media via the hashtag #giveupslavery or via our diocesan website.

You may be inspired to look at where the food you eat comes from, and whether there is any exploitation within the supply chain that gets that food onto your table. You may want to

examine whether the minerals in your mobile phone were mined by child labour. You may be challenged to look closer at whether those working in a nearby car wash or nail bar have any choice about working there.

Wherever you live in our diocese, the temptation is to say "That kind of thing couldn't happen here." It's something that I hear all the time. Unfortunately, examples of people trapped in modern slavery are closer than most of us tend to think.

We know that as organisations join together, we can make a difference and look for sustainable ways to eradicate slavery and support victims, while continuing to raise awareness and educate one another.

As a diocese, we are taking this further. If you want to join other parishes already committed, or as individuals would like to see how you can mobilise some local action, do contact me. Find out more and read about deanery events on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/modernslavery.

Get in touch if you would like to support survivors, or get involved in a community mobilisation process, on 023-9273 2763 or cefennemore@gmail.com