

**June 4, 2023 – Bonni-Belle Pickard –
Immigration and doing what’s right**

Pre-service music:

For the healing of the nations – StF 696
Heaven shall not wait – StF 701
Goodness is stronger than evil

==ORDER OF SERVICE==

Opening Affirmation

Longing for light – StF 706

Prayer

Scriptures – Isaiah 58.6, Amos 5.8-15, James 1.26-27, James 5.1-4

Meditation – seeking justice

Clewer initiative video

<https://theclewerinitiative.org/resources/modern-slavery-and-homelessness>

Confessions

Show me how to stand for justice – StF 713

Interview with Desre Hancocks

I will speak out – StF 702

Intercessions and Lord’s Prayer

Intro to Beauty for brokenness

Beauty for brokenness – StF 693

Benediction

Opening Affirmation – WW19

Among the poor,
Among the proud,
Among the persecuted,
Among the privileged,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

In the private house,
In the public place,
In the wedding feast,
In the judgement hall,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

With a gentle touch,
With an angry word,
With a clear conscience,
With burning love,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

That the kingdom might come,
That the world might believe,
That the powerful might stumble,
That the hidden might be seen,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

Within us, without us,
Behind us, before us,
In this place, in every place,
For this time, for all time,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

Longing for light – StF 706

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kt3Qc04ulOM>

Prayer – WW 20

Because you made the world
And intended for it to be a good place,
And called its people your children;
Because when things seemed at their worst,
You came in Christ to bring out the best in us;
So gracious God, we gladly say:
 Goodness is stronger than evil;
 Love is stronger than hate.
 Light is stronger than darkness;
 Truth is stronger than lies.

Because confusion can reign inside us, despite our faith;
Because anger, tension, bitterness and envy distort our vision;
Because our minds sometimes worry small things out of all proportion;
Because we do not always get it right, we want to believe:
 Goodness is stronger than evil;
 Love is stronger than hate.
 Light is stronger than darkness;
 Truth is stronger than lies.

Because you have promised to hear us,
And are able to change us,
And are willing to make our hearts your home,
We ask you to confront, control, forgive, and encourage us as you know best.

Then let us cherish in our hearts
That which we proclaim with our lips:
 Goodness is stronger than evil;
 Love is stronger than hate.
 Light is stronger than darkness;
 Truth is stronger than lies.

Lord, hear our prayer,
And change our lives
Until we illustrate the grace of the God who makes all things new. Amen.

Isaiah 58.6

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Amos 5:8-15

The one who made the [stars]... and turns deep darkness into the morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name, who makes destruction flash out against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.
Therefore, because you trample on the poor
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and push aside the needy in the gate....

Seek good and not evil, that you may live;
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.
Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

James 1:26-27

If any think they are religious,
and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts,
their religion is worthless.
Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this:
to care for orphans and widows in their distress,
and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 5:1-4

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you.
Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.
Your gold and silver have rusted,
and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire.
You have laid up treasure for the last days.
Listen! The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields,
which you kept back by fraud, cry out,
and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

Meditation – seeking justice

These scripture passages we've heard remind us

That the God we worship is on the side of justice and righteousness,
Which most often translates to being on the side of the vulnerable and the outcast!

This Sunday we'll be thinking again about the presence of slavery in our world,
And our perhaps unintentional involvement in it.

We like to think that slavery ended over 200 years ago -- in 1807 in the UK –
But the reality of the situation is that there are more people in slavery today
Than ever before...

More than 50 million worldwide with many thousands in our own country!

Indeed, the conservative estimates are that there are 136,000 victims of slavery
In the UK today, 1 out of every 500 in the population –
With London and the South East have the largest proportion...

Modern slavery is not usually seen in chains and shackles or trans-atlantic ships,
But in the hidden and illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain,
Much of which has a direct or indirect impact on our own daily lives –
What we think we can 'afford' to buy,
What jobs we are willing to do or not do,
And how much we're willing to pay someone else to do them.

Worldwide, slavery generates about \$150 billion each year
It is the second most lucrative 'business' in the world.

Modern day slavery covers a wide range of abuse
including sex work, domestic servitude,
'cuckooing' (taking over a vulnerable person's home for criminal purposes)
and organ harvesting...

Now, you're probably saying to yourself that none of that applies to you!

But I recall 30 years ago when we were trying to adopt our youngest son from India
And the guardianship hearings were delayed
Because a previous case had involved a couple adopting a child
In order to harvest the child's organs to sell for transplant....

Modern slavery is also found on building sites and in agriculture – even here in Kent.
It happens online and on the streets.

One of the most prevalent forms is in the forced labour
found particularly in hand car washes and nail bars –
perhaps that brings it closer to home...

It is all around us.

There are likely people living in slavery very near you – washing your car
Or doing your nails
Or picking fruits and vegetables in the fields near you
Or perhaps in a pop-up brothel on your street, as I discovered a few years....

There is no 'typical' victim - they may be any age, race or gender.

Young people and children get sucked into drug trafficking on 'county lines'
and through allowing their bank accounts to be used,
often unwittingly, to launder the proceeds of crime.

Lack of education, money or a 'trusted adult' can all increase someone's vulnerability
to being entrapped in slavery.

Modern day slavery is grounded in creating fear
and increasing the victim's isolation and powerlessness.

It's easy to think that slavery happens somewhere else –

But in truth, it's all around us –

It's not just immigrants.

Most of those trapped into slavery in the UK are already resident here,

but perpetrators prey on those who are particularly isolated and vulnerable.

They could indeed be asylum-seekers

or those who arrive in the UK in desperate circumstances.

They could also be lonely people who seem to be just like us...

Charlie clip ...

When we hear the words of scripture again,

It's clear that we as followers of Jesus Christ

have a responsibility to do whatever we can to put an end to slavery in all its forms.

One of the first things we can do is become aware of what might be right under our nose:

Do the people working at that carwash or nail bar seem happy?

Dressed appropriately?

Healthy?

Are they unduly nervous? Looking around to see who's watching?

A second step is to know how to respond.

It's probably not appropriate or wise for any of us to take direct action on our own,

But we can alert the authorities so that victims can be rescued and supported.

We can phone 999 when a victim seems to be in immediate danger,

or 101 in other circumstances.

There is a Modern Slavery helpline 08000 121 700, which operates for advice or support at all hours every day of the year.

If we are concerned to remain completely anonymous we can call CrimeStoppers

on 0800 555 111, who will forward the information to the relevant partner.

If we are concerned about something on church premises,

we must notify the Safeguarding Officer.

It's also important that we begin to think about the areas in which people are enslaved –

Doing the jobs that we'd like someone else to do for us –

I remember hearing a few years ago that a nearby restaurant had been closed down

Because they were using slave labour in their kitchen...

Sometimes our contribution to the evil of slavery

Is just wanting to have things or services for ourselves

At the very cheapest price.

I remember a FairTrade campaign from a few years ago

That told us, for instance, that when we demand 'cheap chocolate',

We're actually promoting slave labour

Who will do the back-breaking work of harvesting cocoa beans

For a pittance...

Who's actually 'paying' for our cheap prices?

Back in the 1800's William Wilberforce caught John Wesley's attention

When he was trying to pass laws within the British parliament

That would abolish slavery.

One of his observations still speaks to us today:

"You may choose to look the other way,
but you can never say again that you did not know."

And we hear the words as well from Martin Luther King

when he was thinking through the story of the Good Samaritan.

He noted that the priest and Levite in the story were asking themselves:

"If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?"

And he contrasted that with the question asked by the Good Samaritan:

"If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

The scriptures make it clear that ALL of us are responsible for each other.

And as Christians, we have a particular responsibility

To do all we can to work for justice for all.

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Confession

Lord Jesus, we join our prayers with people across the world

To ask your guidance and grace

That we may learn to notice the unnoticed,

Especially those trapped in modern slavery.

Bless all who work to fight this crime and bring freedom to those being exploited.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We pray for so many of our sisters and brothers who are suffering

Through forced labour, sexual exploitation,

Domestic servitude, forced begging,

County lines drug trading, forced marriage

Or forced organ donation.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Especially we ask for the courage and wisdom to discern how we might play a part

In reaching out with your love and healing,

And in helping our own communities to become more slavery free.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy. Amen.

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Show me how to stand for justice – StF 713

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8CIU66oFMQ> Joy Everingham

Sometimes our faith demands that we step out even further to combat evil in society.
Recently I met a young woman who was brought up in the Methodist Church –
Her father was and is a strong advocate for social justice –
And he and the Methodist Church she grew up in
Instilled in her a burning desire to make a difference in the world.
She thought for a while about becoming a minister herself,
But then she realised her gifts lay in a different field.
She ended up getting a Masters in Business Administration –
And she's gone on to specialise in Business Ethics –
I've recorded a conversation with her which I want to share with you now.

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Interview with Desre Hancocks, ethics business consultant

What is your consultancy work about?

What led you to take on this kind of work? (your vocation!)

How do the businesses you work with react?

What are the special challenges?

What support do you need from the churches?

I will speak out – StF 702

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCVPKzEQ1EQ&t=29s>

Intercessions – WW20

Holy God, though this world depends on your grace,
It is governed and tended by mortals.
So we pray for those who walk the corridors of power
In the parliaments of this and other lands,
Whose judgments we value or fear.

May they always consider those they represent,
Make decisions with courage and integrity,
And resist any temptation to abuse the trust placed in them.

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We pray for those who hold key positions
In the worlds of finance, business, and industry,
Whose decisions may profit some or impoverish many.

May they always value people higher than profit;
May they never impose burdens on the poor
Which they would not carry themselves;
And may they never divorce money from morality
Or ownership from stewardship.

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We pray for those in the caring professions,,
'Who look after and listen to kind, cruel, and cantankerous folk,
And for those who make decisions regarding the nation's health and welfare.

May they always sense the sanctity of life
And every person's uniqueness;
May they help and heal by their interest as well as their skill;
And may they be saved from tiredness and an excess of demands.

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And let us remember those for whom we are responsible
And to whom we are accountable in what we do today.

May we show to them the thoughtfulness, tolerance,
And kindness of Jesus.

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Lord, hear our prayers,
And if today we might be the means
By which you answer the prayers of others,
Then may you find us neither deaf nor defiant,
But keen to fulfil your purpose for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Beauty for brokenness – StF 693

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNFNJAwnjwA>

Benediction – WW 24

From where we are to where you need us to be,
Jesus, now lead on.

From the security of what we know
To the adventure of what you will reveal.
Jesus, now lead on.

To refashion the fabric of this world
Until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,
Jesus, now lead on.

Because good things have been prepared
For those who love God,
Jesus, now lead on.



WE SEE YOU.

REPORT IT

**Modern Slavery is a crime.
It is important to report suspicions
to the police.**

**Do not attempt to intervene
yourself, you may put yourself and
others in danger.**

If someone is in immediate danger,
call 999

For advice or support call the
Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline:
0800 0121 700

To report non-emergency suspicious
activity call you local police on 101
**For more information on the signs of modern
slavery visit www.theclewerinitiative.org**