

# WOMEN IN THE SHADOWS

## A COURSE FOR LENT 2021

Lent is traditionally a time for taking stock and looking at our lives, values and priorities. It also provides an opportunity to seek guidance on how to change in the new power and hope that Easter proclaims. Over the last couple of years, we have used the season of Lent to shine a spotlight on a particular aspect of modern slavery. Last year, we launched the County Lines resource. This year, we have developed 'Women in the Shadows.'

### MODERN SLAVERY AND THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

Our brief at The Clewer Initiative is to encourage dioceses and churches to raise awareness of modern slavery in the belief that this will lead to the greater identification and care of victims. When The Clewer Initiative first began, we ran a national survey and consultative day for diocesan officers working with social action projects within their dioceses. We also spent time speaking individually to Bishops at General Synod and asking them to appoint a project lead within their diocese to work with us. The take up was very good.

Some of those first project leads are still working on modern slavery issues. The stand out message from the national consultation was that people wanted a clear national steer from The Clewer Initiative so that all the partner dioceses could align themselves. We have tried to achieve this through collaborative working, provision of resources and the offer of help to diocesan officers where needed. We have also sought to improve safeguarding and provide expertise around direct work with victims.

Since 2016, we have worked with many dioceses on the mobilisation of groups of parishes, built some wonderful partnerships (some of which are featured in these Lent films) and understood more of what is possible to achieve.

The last 12 months have been difficult – but have afforded the opportunity to plan, reflect and develop more strategic relationships.

The Clewer Initiative is committed to helping those in the shadows of modern slavery, and, for this Lent, our focus is on women and girls.

### WOMEN IN THE SHADOWS

For too long, in the shadows of the world's great religious, cultural and economic systems, women and girls have been overlooked and taken advantage of. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a call to notice the unnoticed, free those who are held captive and bring the good news of inclusion and supportive community to all who are vulnerable.

'Women in the Shadows' will help us shine the spotlight of the gospel upon the increasing exploitation of vulnerable women and girls in our communities. The course explores three specific areas – sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and county lines – and invites us to gain a deeper understanding of the suffering experienced by many women as well as reflect upon our possible complicity and indifference. It also reminds us of the continuing vulnerability of many in our society and looks at how victims can be supported to live independent lives, free from fear and abuse.

The material in this booklet can be used for individual devotions or as part of a more formal online Lent Course. You can use the short films in their entirety or in part to invite a congregation to think and pray about these challenging issues. We are extremely thankful to everyone who has helped bring this course to fruition and we pray that God would use it to awaken our hearts to the suffering of others and stir us to reach out to more women in the shadows.

*Bishop Alastair Redfern, founder of  
The Clewer Initiative*



## GETTING STARTED

- When you think about modern slavery, do you picture the victims to be male or female? British or international? Young or old?
- How would you define modern slavery? Do you think it is something you find mainly in big cities, towns or the countryside?
- Why do you think women and girls are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of modern slavery and exploitation?
- Do you think there are any misconceptions or prejudices that may make us less aware of women and girls as potential victims of modern slavery?



## WATCH BEGINNINGS

[https://youtu.be/g3TMO\\_-OIEA](https://youtu.be/g3TMO_-OIEA)



## QUESTIONS FROM THE FILM

- What struck you from the film?
- Did anything you heard surprise you?
- What inspired you?
- What questions does it leave you with?



## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew  
a right spirit within me.  
(Psalm 51v10)

**“I’m still always shocked at the  
amount of people that don’t  
know that this happens in our  
country and across the world.**

**Awareness raising is  
very important.”**

Karen Anstiss, Bakhita House



## EXPLORATION

Harriet Monsell was the first leader of the religious community formed in the parish of Clewer to respond to the huge local issue of sex slavery. Her story provides an interesting template for a Christian response to such a vast, complex and seemingly intractable issue as slavery in modern societies.

The parish contained large numbers of military, and labourers engaged in railway construction and building projects. A huge industry developed to provide sexual services. The parish priest, Thomas T Carter, and some of his congregation recognised the suffering and desperate plight of so many women and girls. They began to offer pastoral care and comfort, and then set up a house to provide a home for rescued victims. The demand soon threatened to overwhelm these typically local and ad hoc efforts of Christian concern. This was when Harriet arrived, newly widowed, to stay with some relatives in the parish.

She became drawn into the work, and helped establish the structures, and systems to make it secure and viable for the future.

Other women were recruited and formed into a religious order. The foundation of all the work was prayer – articulating concerns and hopes amidst so much exploitation and suffering.

The second element was responding practically – the purchase of property, fundraising, forming a Council which included Mr Gladstone and other significant people, and gaining the support of the Bishop of Oxford – Samuel Wilberforce – son of William Wilberforce the great abolitionist.

The third characteristic of the ministry was that of partnership – between the helpers and sisters in a praying community; between helpers and those seeking help in a wider community which shared the same home/property; between the project and local church; between the aspirations to make an effective response and significant policy makers and influencers in both church and civil society.

The foundational principle was to empower the women and girls who came seeking help, by teaching them skills so that they would no longer be dependent on others, especially on men and their resources.

Mother Harriet joined others to enable her response to what we call modern slavery. She shows how prayerful concern can join individuals, local communities, public authorities and eventually people in other cultures and countries, in a common endeavour to bring light to the shadows. Her starting point was always to pray for the renewal of a right spirit within herself and within others, “create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me.”



## FOR REFLECTION

- 1 In what ways might women and girls live in the shadows today:
  - in your community
  - in our nation
  - more globally?
- 2 How can Harriet’s example of prayer – practical action – partnership – form a framework to enable local initiatives today? How will it help us see more clearly, act more effectively and embrace others more directly?
- 3 What practical commitment could you make to bring light to women in the shadows near you? Who could you tell this week about the issue of modern slavery and help to spread the word?



## PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*Holy God, thank you for the light of Jesus to illuminate our ways and inspire our witness.*

*Help us learn to live more fully by His light, so that we may better perceive your children who suffer in the shadows and silently seek the love you give us to share.*

*We pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*



## DIGGING DEEPER

**Why are women disproportionately affected by modern slavery?**

There is no typical victim of slavery. Victims are men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities and nationalities. However, it is normally more prevalent among the most vulnerable or within minority or socially excluded groups.

Worldwide, women and girls account for **71 per cent** of the **40.3 million** people living in modern slavery. In fact, **one in every 130 females** globally is living in modern slavery.

There are many factors that contribute towards this gender imbalance. It can begin even before birth as many cultures place less value on girls. This can lead to sex selection and female infanticide. In many countries, fewer girls attend school and often have less access to medical care than boys. On top of this, laws can exacerbate, rather than protect women from modern slavery. Some laws prevent women from inheriting land and assets, conferring citizenship on their children, travelling freely, and working without their husbands’ permission.

## GLOBAL SNAPSHOT<sup>1</sup>

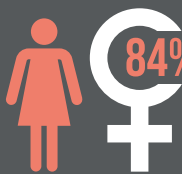


Globally, there are  
**122 WOMEN** (aged 25-34) in  
**EXTREME POVERTY**  
for every 100 men of the same age

**15 MILLION GIRLS** each year will never go to school.  
This increases the risk of child marriage and forced labour.

Only  
**2 IN 5 GIRLS**   
worldwide complete  
secondary school

**13 MILLION GIRLS**   
have experienced  
forced sex in  
their lifetime



Women and girls make up  
**84% OF ALL FORCED  
MARRIAGE VICTIMS**

*“The only way that slavery is going to end is if society as a whole gets together to do their bit... we all have a role to play.”*

Louise Hlland, campaigner and journalist



## FURTHER READING

To build on today’s session, you may like to spend some time during the week reflecting on what you have learnt about modern slavery and Harriet Monsell’s example of prayer – practical action – partnership.

You can also read more about the early influences that led to Harriet’s radical ministry:

## HARRIET MONSELL – EARLY INFLUENCES

Mother Harriet Monsell, along with The Rev. Thomas Thelluson Carter, co-founded the Community of St. John Baptist in 1852 to rescue prostitutes from the streets of Clewer Fields at Windsor.

Born into one of the oldest families in Ireland, Harriet’s parents instilled a deep sense of charity in all nine of their children. From an early age, they worked alongside them in numerous charitable missions and gained an indelible awareness of their responsibility to live out the Gospel through helping the poor.

The men in Harriet’s family, according to T.T. Carter, were “much engaged in politics” and her mother Charlotte was “a sincerely religious woman...She was very kind to the poor and practical in her methods of assisting them: among other designs, it was her want to have the women and children on the estate taught embroidery, with the view of enabling them afterward to earn their living.”

In 1839, Harriet married Rev. Charles Monsell, the son of the Archdeacon of Derry. Harriet and Charles were happily married for twelve years, but Charles was always in poor health due to tuberculosis, and in 1851 he died, at the age of 36.

After Charles was buried, Harriet went to England to stay with her sister Katherine, and Katharine’s husband, Rev. Charles Harris.

At the time, Charles was working as a chaplain to a large and unusual household full of women at Windsor. The house had begun as a small mission to rescue “fallen women” when Mariquita Tennant, the stalwart Spanish widow of an Anglican clergyman, had agreed to take in one pregnant and abused woman at the request of the Rev. Thomas Thelluson Carter, the Rector of Clewer.

Between 1848 and 1851, Mariquita and Canon Carter's small mission had – with the encouragement of William Gladstone and many other supporters – grown to include over twenty women, but the crushing responsibilities had caused Mariquita's health to suffer. By the time Harriet moved in with her sister Katharine and the Rev. Harris, the Clewer House of Mercy, as it had been named, was looking for ladies to help. Harriet immediately offered to work at the House despite having no experience in helping “fallen women” and no idea what the work might involve.

1

Does your lack of experience hold you back from helping vulnerable people around you?

2

How could Harriet's example inspire you to take action?

3

Harriet worked closely with many others – how could you build a coalition of like-minded people and begin to think about fighting modern slavery in your community?

“One of the biggest problems we face in the modern slavery arena is that the offences are hidden.”

Jen Baines, GLAA



## SPOTLIGHT ON BELOVED

Beloved offers support to women working in massage parlours in Bristol and surrounding areas. Its aim is to offer love, hope and time to talk in various ways.

Beloved only visits massage parlours where it is welcome and each woman receives a goodie bag containing cupcakes, toiletries and other simple gifts.

Teams of volunteers from various churches in Bristol go out each month on a regular night, offering a friendly face, a listening ear and, if the women want, prayer. The team distributes personal attack alarms, safety information, and signposts the women to local organisations such as specialist sexual health clinics, homeless shelters, local drug projects and weekly friendship groups.



<https://beloved.org.uk/>

## WOMEN IN THE SHADOWS

resource: [www.theclewerinitiative.org/womenintheshadows](http://www.theclewerinitiative.org/womenintheshadows)

<sup>1</sup>Global statistics taken from Stacked Odds, a recent report by Walk Free exploring how lifelong inequality shapes women and girls' experience of modern slavery  
[www.cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2020/10/09024229/Stacked-Odds\\_201008\\_FNL1\\_LR.pdf](http://www.cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2020/10/09024229/Stacked-Odds_201008_FNL1_LR.pdf)