MODERN-DAY SLAVERY
A SUGGESTED 60-MIN PRAYER GUIDE

Below you will find a centring prayer, Scripture, and a range of ‘prayer actions’. Please feel free to use what you want. Permission to dip in and out, follow the suggested timings or go at your own pace.

Depending on what ‘prayer action’ you choose to take you may need a Bible, a pen or pencil, a device with WIFI, a candle and some matches. You may also like to print this resource out – scroll down to find out more before entering prayer.

INTRO

Modern-day slavery is one of the most iniquitous evils of the 21st Century. Despite the efforts of William Wilberforce nearly 200 years ago and the work of numerous campaigners since, there are more than 5,000,000 slaves in the world today (The equivalent to the population of Australia).

It is estimated that there are at least 136,000 victims in the United Kingdom, which is about the same as the population of Ipswich. These people are not just hard-working, low paid individuals who are struggling to make ends meet, they are actually ‘owned’ and controlled by criminals who exploit them for gain. They are all around us, in most of our communities and many of our workplaces.

The whole Christian message is a story of deliverance from captivity into a freedom in love. As we pray together against modern-day slavery, we add our voices to the many who work and campaign to continue that legacy of freedom.

These prayer activities and resources are created in partnership with Roots Intercultural Worshipping Community, Christians in Leicester and Leicestershire Against Modern Day Slavery, and The Community of the Tree of Life.
CENTRING & SILENCE [5 mins]

Get into a comfortable posture and pray,

‘As we enter prayer now, we pause to be still, slow our breathing, and centre ourselves in the abiding presence of Christ’

Bring your attention to your breath. Treat each breath in as an arrival. Breathe in God’s presence. As you breath out, imagine letting go of future worries and responsibilities to God. Become present.

OPENING SCRIPTURES [5 min]

Isaiah 65: 17-25 [NIV]

Behold I will create a new heaven and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in what I will create, for I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them.

Hebrews 13:1-3 [NIV]

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering.
REMEMBER [15 MINS]

‘No pen can give an adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery.’ - Harriet Ann Jacobs

In Leicestershire, there are an estimated 10,000 people working in situations in modern slavery, and many of those are garment workers. The Diocesan Mother's Union have knitted over 10000 chain links to represent each of these people.

It can be overwhelming to be faced with the sheer number of individuals who suffer at the hands of exploitative and abusive labour. It may be difficult to find the words.

// OPTION ONE: MAKE A NAME BADGE

The Dorcas Dress project hope to work with a local Leicester factory, asking them to manufacture a batch of their stylish dresses, paying them well for their work, and offering English language sessions and ongoing pastoral support to the staff. One of their first informal activities with the workers is to make name tags – to make the names of these individuals known.

Why not emulate this activity – make a name badge for yourself or for someone else and pray for the garment factory workers.
God knows each of their names, and their faces, and their stories. God cares passionately, deeply, extravagantly, about each of these workers. May garment workers in Leicester and Leicestershire experience His comfort, His immense love, and find the support they need.

// OPTION 2: PRAY THE PSALMS

When we don’t know how to pray, or lack the words, the Psalms are a great resource for prayer. Here is a selection of Psalms that you might like to pray on behalf of victims of modern-day slavery or select your own.

There may be one or two words or phrases that stick out at you. You can use these as mantras, repeating them again and again before God, offering up your requests on behalf of others.

**PSALM 22**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?
2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.\[a\]
3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.\[b\]
4 In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them.
5 To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

[...]

10 From birth I was cast on you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God.
11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.
12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
13 Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.
14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.

[...]

19 But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.
20 Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.
All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—those who cannot keep themselves alive.

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

PSALM 102

1 Hear my prayer, L ORD; let my cry for help come to you.
2 Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.
3 For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers.
4 My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food.
5 In my distress I groan aloud and am reduced to skin and bones.
6 I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins.
7 I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof.
8 All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse.
9 For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside.
10 My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass.
11 But you, L ORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations.
12 You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come.
13 For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity.
14 The nations will fear the name of the L ORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.
15 For the L ORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory.
17 He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; 
he will not despise their plea.

// OPTION 3: PRAYER CHAIN

If you are praying in the Tree of Life Chapel, you may like to use the Knitted Chain to pray. 
You could use the chain like prayer beads. As you hold each chain link, you may like to pray for the people they represent. With each link, you may like to pray: ‘The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you. The Lord life up His countenance upon you and give you peace.’ You could also pray your own prayer, or even a single word.

Don’t worry if you don’t get through all the chain links.

LAMENT [15 MINS]

Follow through this prayer: a lament using our senses adapted from the Clewer Initiative. 
The words in red are suggested physical responses you might like to use. Feel free, however, to follow the suggestions or respond how you feel led or as you are able to.

We still ourselves before Almighty God, as we come into God’s presence.

Pause

// TOUCH

*Take off your shoes/socks*

As we approach this time of prayer for those exploited, bruised and weary, may we draw near to you, bare foot, sensing the holy ground on which we stand, shoulder to shoulder with all for whom coercion and control dominates their lives.

Pause

// SIGHT

We see you; we don’t see you; we look but we lack visual acuity to recognise the suffering before our eyes.

God, help us to see our vulnerable brothers and sisters as you see them.

*Close your eyes. Notice how your other senses respond.*

Open our eyes, our hearts and our souls to recognise the vulnerable and all who are precious in your sight.

Pause
// HEARING

Gracious God, we hear your command to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Open our ears in a new way.

May the bells that ring out across our nation, appeal to the ears of those for whom are unaware of their complicity in this crime.

*Listen to this song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpGu359wRjE*

May we listen afresh through the silence, allowing our heads and hearts to respond to how you are calling us to action; in our own diocese and county and to the cries ringing from all the corners of our global community.

Pause

// LIGHT

*Light a candle. Notice the smell, the sound, the warmth.*

Lord we hold today before you;

The 11-year-old, wearing a mask, with cotton wool in his ears, armed with a shovel to mine gold underwater, dizzy from oil fumes from leaking machinery.

The 14-year-old, feeling his way through the dark and deep waters fearful that the pit walls will collapse, guided only by his sense of touch to recognise the stones he must shovel.

The teenager transferring cash to hand for drugs in a subway.

The homeless person, within reach of the change dropped in his box, knowing that his exploiter will take this too, depleting him still further from the street life of hand to mouth not of his choosing.

For those for whom this night will lie, not at rest, but endure the unwanted touch of another, inside and out, with the knowledge that tomorrow will bring the same.

For those who toil and labour wearing inappropriate clothing for their tasks, hungry and sleep deprived through unrelenting activity.

Lord, as you turn darkness into morning, may your will be done on earth.

Amen.

**VISIO DIVINA: CHANGE IN OUR WORLD [15 MINS]**

While gazing at an image, a painting, a photo, an icon, a sculpture, a piece of pottery ... something may leap out at us, calling our attention to something of God just waiting to reveal itself to us.
We can take courage and hope from campaigners and those actively seeking to end it. We can also be inspired to help bring about justice through our prayer and action beyond these 24 hours.

Read the story of Saint Josephine Bakhita and take a moment to gaze on her icon.

*What hope does her story give you?*

*Is there a call to action that wells up in your heart?*

Born in the Darfur region of Sudan in 1869, St. Josephine Bakhita was kidnapped and enslaved as a child. Eventually she was sold to an Italian diplomat and taken to Italy, where she asserted her freedom with the help of the Cannossian Sisters of Venice. Through her faith, St. Bakhita realized the promise of liberty inherent in the human spirit. Years later, St. Bakhita was
canonized and is now known as the patron Saint of Sudan. She is also uplifted as the patron saint of victims of trafficking. She lived out the rest of her life as a Cannossian sister, sharing her empowering testimony of human freedom and dignity.

// TAKE ACTION

Here are some places where you can find resources to help you engage in practical and prayerful ways with the fight against modern-day slavery:

1 // The Clewer Initiative

2 // Christians in Leicester and Leicestershire Against Modern Day Slavery

3 // Saffires offers chaplaincy and informal pastoral support for women in the sex industry in Leicester. They do this by providing confidential care, friendship, practical help, signposting to appropriate services and opportunities to make positive life changes.

There are many women working in the sex industry in Leicester. These precious people, who God loves so extravagantly, have each been on painful journeys and found themselves in awful situations. Pray for them. And pray for the work of Saffires, as they reach out with God’s love to the women both inside the parlours and outside on the street. There are many ways to support their incredible work!

4 // Find out how to spot and help those who are victims of modern-day slavery through the Modern Slavery Helpline.

5 // The Dorcus Dress Project

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, we long for change in our world.
We see those living in poverty, the homeless, refugees, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, and we feel hopeless.
May our prayers for change in society be like ripples in the water, reaching out into ever-widening circles:
a powerhouse of prayer.
For Christ’s name, who was himself a refugee, homeless and abused.
Amen