Welcome to this latest issue of the SR News. We’re so thankful that you’re choosing to read and we hope you find it educational and enjoyable. Amongst other things, last time we learnt about the brutal effect covid has had on the poverty rates in the city whilst also hearing about the encouraging steps happening to help tackle homelessness. We heard that the diocese had launched their Racial Equity Strategy and why, as Christians, that is so important. We hope some of the items resonated with you and gave you things to pray about and potentially act upon.

We have another jam-packed issue for you today. We draw your attention to Creationtide and why it’s so important to be looking after our world, we have some dates to mark in your diaries and consider how you may act upon them and we also have our eyes opened to just how close to our doorsteps slavery is. The point of telling you all these things isn’t to scare you or make you sad, it’s to educate and inspire you to want to take action!
Autumn of Action!

Through this summer we have seen a number of events that warrant the well-worn word, “unprecedented” – the heat-dome bringing record temperatures to the Pacific north-west, massive wildfires in the US, Turkey, Greece, and Italy. We’ve seen a huge loss of life in floods in Germany, China, and elsewhere. And on the day I am writing this, the hottest temperature ever recorded in Europe: 48.8 degrees in Sicily.

In this same week, the IPCC published its latest report on the climate emergency. This has been described as

“CODE RED FOR HUMANITY”

Sir David Attenborough has already warned us that we face the collapse of human civilisation. The report was published as part of the next “Conference of Parties” (COP26) meeting in Glasgow at the start of November when the leaders of the world come together to try and agree on a way forward.

All this comes as we are still finding our way through the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic, and many of us bear burdens of loss, grief, and bewilderment from this. Also, some are wondering how to construct a “new normal” that is fairer, more sustainable, and better for all.

We may be left wondering where God is in all of this, or at least wondering what the Church is up to. Of course, it is foundational to our faith that the world was created by God and belongs to him. As Christians, we have a duty to care for it, as well as to love our neighbors who are experiencing the effects of global heating. For these reasons the national Church of England has committed to reducing its emissions to net-zero by 2030, and here in the Diocese of Leicester we are also determined to become an Eco-diocese.

Each year, from September 1st to October 4th churches keep the season of Creation (Creationtide), when we particularly focus on these issues in our prayer and worship (and hopefully in our action too!) Those dates encompass most churches’ harvest celebrations, as well as the feast of St Francis of Assisi, patron of ecologists.

This year in particular, in the run-up to COP26 there will be a special intensity to what we do, and local churches are being encouraged to take action in particular ways:
Hold a “Climate Sunday” service – this could be on any Sunday between now and November, when COP26 starts. Obviously it could be part of your Creationtide services. There will be a national service on the 5th of September, and you can find resources and further information on planning your own service at here.

Register as an Eco-church! Over 40 churches in the diocese have already done this, and some have already achieved their award. Registering is really easy to do, and the assessment process of filling in an online questionnaire covering different aspects of church life (not just the building!) also provides guidance on what you can do. Getting more churches registered (and awarded) will also help with our Eco-diocese award. Find out more at here.

Do something practical! Change to a green energy supplier (individually, or as a church). Write to your MP or the PM expressing your concern – you could even invite a local politician to your church to answer questions! Organise a litter pick or get involved in some practical conservation. Hold a service outdoors (as many have done during the pandemic) and experience “Forest Church” – many of our diocesan pioneer ministers are experts in this!

Become a pilgrim, and pray! Various groups are making pilgrimages to Glasgow – with this international gathering so close we have an opportunity to witness and be involved in a special way. More details here. Even if you can’t make the journey, you may be able to offer support to those who are, and whatever you do, pray. As we shape the new normal in our churches, homes, workplaces, schools, we must do so aware of the ecological precipice on which we dance. The earth is groaning.

If you’d like any help or advice, please get in touch with Andrew our environment officer: revdaquigley@gmail.com
Prisons Week of Prayer

Mark your calendars, this year's Prison's Week of Prayer runs from **10th-16th October**.

For forty years, Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature to enable the Christian community, through individuals and churches, to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons: prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities, those working in the criminal justice system and the many people who are involved in caring for those affected by crime on the inside and outside of our prisons.

Prisons Week raises awareness and generates prayer. Perhaps you would like to encourage your church community to pray for prisons, prisoners and their families during this week.

For more information and resources we encourage you to visit the **Prison Week website**.

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World Suicide Prevention Day

World Suicide Prevention Day is an awareness day observed on 10th September every year, in order to provide worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicides. World Suicide Prevention Day aims to start the conversation about suicide and to show that recovery is possible.

Knowing where to go or where to point people to is a big barrier to mental health support that we can overcome. So, where can someone go for support for their mental health?

- Your GP
- Leics Partnership Trust (mental health support) Central Access Point operates 24/7
- CALM - Campaign Against Living Miserably (especially for men)
- Samaritans 116123
- Cruse (for bereavement support after being bereaved by suicide)
- Text ‘SHOUT’ to 85258
- you can call SANEl ine on 0300 304 7000
Does it Matter That Gangsters are Targeting People with Disabilities?

Journalist Mike Lambert explores the frequently overlooked connection between disability and modern slavery. His analysis is deeply troubling. In December 2020, the BBC website published an article I'd written based on the modern slavery storyline in The Archers. Like other listeners to the radio soap, I was gripped by a plot in which an established and respected member of village life was slowly being unmasked as a callous gangmaster. Above and beyond all the drama, I had another, more important and personal motive for wanting to write that article. I'd noticed something unusual about how the three, young, UK-born, modern slaves were being depicted. Only one of them, called Blake, had a speaking part and it sounded to me like he had a Learning Disability. It was a detail that lent weight to an idea that had been growing in my mind for the previous three years – and here was my chance to do some research.

When I pitched my article to an editor at the BBC, he initially sounded slightly sceptical. After all, none of the other characters in The Archers had referred to Blake as having a disability. Understandably, he wanted to fact-check and emailed a colleague on The Archers' team. When he received the reply, "Mike is correct in what he's deduced," I got the green light to start my investigations.

The Rooney Gang

In August 2017, I was intrigued by another item on the evening news. The Rooney gang – a Lincolnshire-based, Traveller family – had just been convicted of enslaving 18 men into hard labour. According to the report, a proportion of the victims were UK-born, making me wonder how on earth such a thing could have happened. Next morning's paper confirmed my worst suspicions. Whereas the BBC had merely described the victims as "vulnerable," The Guardian headline read, "UK Family Found Guilty of Enslaving Homeless and Disabled People."

The idea haunted me. Then, three weeks later, on a train ride between Doncaster and Newark, I met a young man called Chris. I heard about Chris's appalling upbringing in Burnley, his abusive and alcoholic mother, and the time he'd once "worked" for a "bad man" called John Rooney. When we reached Chris's stop, he asked to shake my hand and said "I can tell you're a good person – God bless you."

It was an extraordinary moment. Not only had I just met one of those victims whose stories had so recently disturbed me but from our conversation, I was convinced that Chris had a Learning Disability. Then, to top it off, there were his parting words. There was something pleasant – even seductive – about being told I was a "good person." But in truth, Chris had only been projecting onto me those qualities he was searching for in an older adult. As the train pulled out of Newark, I felt fearful about his future.
On 16 December, my [Mike's] article went up on the BBC website. By then, I'd spoken to numerous specialist agencies (including The Clewer Initiative) and was able to demonstrate a clear but frequently overlooked connection between disability and modern slavery. Of course, gangmasters will target vulnerability wherever they can find it but I believe the exploitation of disabled people is a matter of particular concern, demanding some very specific changes to existing systems.

Lost in the statistics
Surprisingly, the National Referral Mechanism does not currently count victims with a disability (although it does count victims according to race and gender). For as long as disabled victims remain statistically hidden, they will not receive the additional funding necessary for their protection.

Another reason for focusing on disability has to do with the rehabilitation of victims. How can victims be properly rehabilitated and prevented from falling back into exploitation if their underlying disabilities and on-going support needs aren't understood? Finally, strategies for preventing modern slavery need to take account of the targeting and grooming of people with disabilities. If we know that young disabled people are particularly at risk, then changes are required to our education and welfare systems. At school and college, young people with learning disabilities should receive instruction on what constitutes a genuine job, how to recognise grooming and when to contact the police. Furthermore, social services need to be more proactive in monitoring those disabled individuals not well supported by family or community.

Read Mike Lambert's full article, including reflection on his own experience of being disabled.

With thanks to The Clewer Initiative & Mike for permission to share the above with you. Please do read the full article.

It's a scary reality that's present in our city. The Clewer Initiative have some brilliant resources and information you might find helpful to make steps to tackle this:

- Spot the Signs
- Posters and Leaflets
- Who to Contact
Anti-Slavery Day

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies, yet not one of them is forgotten by God

No one chooses to be a slave. It's not on anyone’s projected career path, yet there are thousands of men, women, and children living as slaves in this country. They are vulnerable, innocent, desperate, or unsuspecting people who are trapped in that situation by criminal gangs who exploit their victims for money and power. They are not confined to any particular neighborhood. Last year we used the phrase ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’ to describe them because they can be found in any community. It is not true that they are only found in nail bars, car-washes, and the sex trade. They can be found in any workplace, any farm or market garden, any shop, salon, or private home. They are men, women and, shockingly, children, who have been enticed, coerced, or forced to live a life without freedom or money, subject to violence and fear.

During the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of children recruited to carry drugs – the County Lines. This is a country-wide problem and any child is at risk through their friends and contacts. For such a child, the future is bleak unless they are rescued. If God does not forget the sparrows, He will not forget His children who are victims of slavery. We must not forget them either.

Please do pray for those in Leicestershire impacted by modern slavery in any form. Here is a prayer you might like to use, from the Mothers’ Union:

We pray for all who are trapped in the chains of modern slavery. May they know hope in the midst of despair and a practical way out of their plight. We give thanks for all initiatives to rescue victims of exploitation and pray for their success in ending many schemes for human trafficking. Increase our awareness of evidence of wrongdoing and boldness to uncover the deeds of darkness. May we show our compassion for the victims in tangible ways of provision and care.

We pray in the name of Christ who came to set captives free.

Amen.

The Clewer Initiative offers free training around the County Lines drug trade for anyone in Leicestershire who is interested. This will take place online and is spread across three Thursday afternoons in October. Contact Kat Gibson for more details or to express interest: kat.gibson@leicestercofe.org.

Also do connect with the CLLAMS Facebook group here for regular updates on the situation in our city and how we can help to stop modern slavery!
Keep a look out for our next issue coming out closer to Christmas!

What sparks your interest from these updates of our 'loving service of the world'? Do feel free to get in touch with someone on here who shares your passion - it would be great to connect with you and make use of your God-given gifts! Please also pray for the different areas of work, and for the many people involved in each of them. We look forward to sharing more with you in the next issue!