**Modern Slavery Report to MU Council July 2021**

Feedback from London ‘Hidden Voices’ seminar 01 July 2021

* *“It’s been very eye-opening and I feel encouraged by the idea that we all have things to offer even when we think we don’t. I feel inspired into action!!”*
* *“I have learned so much about how modern slavery happens in the UK and will know what to look out for or what is suspicious behaviour.”*

The scourge of Modern Slavery continues to be a frightening reality of our national life and our local life too. These quotes are to encourage you to dig a little deeper and see how every MU member can help.

The Modern Slavery Networking Agency, that Bishop Martin asked Rev’d Carol Mansell to convene, continues to meet regularly by Zoom at this present time. In the Network there are representatives from many agencies so the whole work is coordinated and information shared. Members include Suffolk Police, British Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Social Services, Mothers’ Union, Christian ministers both lay and ordained. We receive input from The Clewer Initiative and Unseen.

Mothers’ Union brings to the Network our Prayer and our presence in small communities. Although the network is wider than purely a Christian forum, the majority are people of faith and the Diocese and MU are underpinned by the Clewer information.

Many of the agencies are hands-on with victims which is a specialised task and the Police also deal with the Gang Masters and perpetrators which may lead to arrests. Within the local police force more workers are being recruited to work within communities and this is encouraging and effective.

Covid has worsened the situation and where County Lines used to use public transport and be identified more easily, now the ‘slaves’ are driven to locations by vans. As poverty increases the vulnerable, including disabled people, are recruited by promise of money or worse. Often vulnerable disabled people with accommodation find unwelcome lodgers forced on them.

The street theatre we had planned, to raise awareness amongst young people and at UEA has been deferred and I shall have news of local events following the MSN Zoom on 16 July.

Just as MU raised awareness of Domestic Abuse we can address Modern Slavery, by our prayer, our watchfulness, our persistence to talk about it at church and wherever we can, and our courage to watch Clewer videos and their courses like Women in the Shadows. There is an excellent book, The Truth about Modern Slavery by Emily Kenway well worth passing around.

Please raise any questions you have and I will try to find the answer and let me know if you have interest groups and your activities so I can share details with Carol Mansell.

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