



# Tackling Modern Slavery

At All Saints Kingston, a thoughtful and engaged audience gathered for an evening that was both challenging and deeply necessary. The panel discussion on modern slavery offered a sobering reminder that exploitation is not confined to distant places or dramatic headlines. It is happening “right here, right now” in communities across the UK. For churches, the conversation served as a call to awareness, compassion, and practical action — values at the heart of Christian community life.

Opening the event, Jiska Stiel, womens hub coordinator at Voices of Hope, laid out the scale of the crisis with clarity and care. An estimated 130,000 people are enslaved in the UK at any given time, she explained — a figure that startled many listeners. She described how traffickers prey on people experiencing hardship, offering what appears to be legitimate work before trapping them in cycles of exploitation. “We all could be in situations where we are groomed into something that sounds like a proper job... but it’s someone having their own profit in mind.”

Her words reminded the audience that exploitation often begins quietly, in moments of vulnerability, and that communities have a vital role in offering support before harm takes root.

The conversation then shifted to the systemic issues that allow modern slavery to flourish. Jennifer Hyde, adviser and co-lead for Southwark Against Modern Slavery for the Diocese of Southwark, spoke about the underfunded care sector, where many overseas workers arrive hopeful but quickly find themselves trapped in debt bondage. Recruitment fees, false promises, and threats create an environment where people feel they have no voice and no escape. “They are terrified to a level I cannot put into words... They’re told, ‘If you speak up, you will be arrested... We will take this out on your family back home.’” Her testimony highlighted the importance of safe, trusted spaces — something churches are uniquely positioned to offer.

Chris Elliott, adviser and co-lead for Southwark Against Modern Slavery for the Diocese of Southwark, emphasised that ordinary people often provide the first

clue that leads to someone's rescue. Police rely heavily on community reports, he explained, and even a small concern can be significant. "If you see something, if your gut says that ain't right, then report it to somebody." His message was simple: vigilance is an act of care.

Closing the evening, Professor Carol Murphy of the The Bakhita Centre at St Mary's University in Twickenham spoke about prevention and long-term restoration. Reflecting on the familiar story of someone rescuing stranded starfish one by one, she offered a challenge: "What if you could do something to stop the starfish from washing up on the beach?"

Her question encouraged the audience to think not only about rescue but about addressing the conditions that allow exploitation to happen in the first place. The event served as a reminder that awareness, compassion, and small acts of courage can make a real difference. For churches, this is an invitation to be attentive, informed, and ready to stand alongside those who need support most.

*We are grateful to our speakers: Jiska Stieler, women's Hub co-ordinator at Voices of Hope [www.voh.org.uk](http://www.voh.org.uk),  
Chris Elliott and Jennifer Hyde co-leads for Southwark against modern slavery [www.southwarkagainstmodernslavery.org.uk](http://www.southwarkagainstmodernslavery.org.uk)  
and Carole Murphy, Director of the Bakhita centre for slavery, safety and social justice [www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/overview.aspx](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/overview.aspx)  
You may view the entire talk via [www.youtube.com/@allsaintskingston8231](https://www.youtube.com/@allsaintskingston8231)*

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## Faith Talk at All Saints Kingston

Wednesday May 20<sup>th</sup> 6.30pm



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### Speaker



Jiska Stieler women's Hub Co-ordinator at Voices of Hope, a Kingston based charity supporting women and children facing gender-based violence, poverty, and systemic disadvantage

### Panellists



Host - Rev Joe Moffatt Team Rector of Kingston Vicar of All Saints, Chair of Kingston Faith and Belief Forum



Chris Elliott - Diocesan Advisor and Co-Lead for Southwark Against Modern Slavery



Jennifer Hyde - Diocesan Advisor and Co-Lead for Southwark Against Modern Slavery



Carole Murphy - Professor of Slavery at St Mary's University and Director of the Bakhita Centre for Slavery, Safety and Social Justice