Kehillah

Cultivating Communities
Against Exploitation

A SIX-WEEK COURSE FOR CHURCHES AND INDIVIDUALS

A facilitator's guide



Created by

THE CLEWER
INITIATIVE



INTRODUCTION

LOIS BOSATTA, DIRECTOR OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE



We are passionate about communities because we believe they are the first line of defence against modern slavery. When people are connected, cared for, and known by others, exploitation finds it much harder to gain a foothold. We call this "community resilience" and we believe churches are well placed to nurture this sort of resilience.

This idea of community resilience isn't a new one. At the very beginning of the Bible, God outlines a vision for society where the poor and outsider are provided for, people are not cheated, wages are paid, justice is upheld, young women are treated honourably and God's ways are followed (Leviticus 19).

In fact, the Hebrew word for a community like this is "Kehillah" (pronounced keh-hee-lah) and it describes a community of action, responsibility, and mutual care.

In the book of Nehemiah 5, we see this idea played out.

The Israelites are rebuilding Jerusalem's walls but they are struggling. There's a famine, they have many children and they feel powerless. They cry out: "Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

Nehemiah hears their cry, becomes very angry and calls everyone together for a "Kehillah". At this "Kehillah" he challenges the community to take collective responsibility for the suffering and exploitation of their brothers and sisters and to correct the systemic injustice.

This is a brilliant, Biblical example of victims of injustice self-advocating and challenging a community to uphold their rights.

Over the centuries, in Jewish tradition, the 'Kehillah' became responsible for ensuring that the poor were fed, the sick were visited, and justice was maintained. It is the ultimate expression of "sharing in each other's burdens" and ensuring that no individual faces hardship alone.

We have therefore named our latest resource Kehillah: Building Communities against Exploitation because the Hebrew word beautifully encapsulates our vision for resilient churches and communities.

We hope you enjoy reflecting on this idea and considering how you can make Kehillah more of a reality in your neighbourhood.

Kehillah

Cultivating Communities Against Exploitation

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

In this six-week, interactive course we explore God's vision for His people (as described in various different parts of the Bible) and consider how our churches can be inclusive, welcoming, united, hospitable, loving and prayerful places, full of people who work with others to speak out against injustice and care for the vulnerable people in their community.

We share stories of churches and individuals who are actively engaged in tackling modern slavery in their communities and signpost resources and ideas for making a difference in your neighbourhood.

Our hope for you (and your church) as you work through this course, is that you will be inspired at the part you can play in building resilient communities. We pray that following the six weeks, you will be left with many practical ideas and actions that will strengthen your church and bless your community.

WEEK BY WEEK SUMMARY OF COURSE

WEEK 1	BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITIES	God's original vision for community and my part in it	Genesis 1 & 2 Leviticus 19: 1-18; 29-37
WEEK 2	UNITED COMMUNITIES	Churches where everyone is valued equally, united and welcome	Galatians 3: 26-28 Ephesians 2:13-22
WEEK 3	LOVING COMMUNITIES	Churches where love, grace and hospitality abounds	Romans 12: 1-2, 9-21
WEEK 4	COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES	Communities that work with others to fight injustice	Proverbs 31:8-9 Isaiah 1:17
WEEK 5	PRAYERFUL COMMUNITIES	Churches that are faithful and passionate in prayer	Colossians 1: 3-14
WEEK 6	HOPEFUL COMMUNITIES	Churches that are focused on the future	Isaiah 65:17-25

NOTES FOR LEADERS

CARING FOR YOURSELF

This resource is about a subject which is emotive and upsetting. Before you start, think about how you will care for yourself and others. If you are distressed by the subject matter or it has triggered painful memories, we would urge you to reconsider if it is appropriate for you to deliver the course, and if you'd like to go ahead, to share your concerns with a leader, pastor, mental health support. Each of us needs grace and healing and the opportunity to recognise and process our own vulnerabilities, and its important that you are in a good place to help facilitate a safe place for others to learn and reflect together.

CARING FOR OTHERS

Before you start the course, consider the individuals who are planning to join you. Be aware that participants bring their own backgrounds and stories to the course. You may know some participants and their stories well, others you may not. The content in this resource covers traumatic material including modern slavery, exploitation, grooming, abuse and racism and touches on themes of loneliness, isolation and immigration. The content may affect participants or trigger memories. They may go quiet or start sharing their stories, cry, shake, fidget or squirm, leave the room or even get aggressive or argumentative as a defence mechanism. It is the facilitator's role to be aware of what might be going on in the room, to ensure this doesn't dominate the time together with others, and to signpost participants to external support if needed.

At the start of each session, it is good to remind people that some of the topics covered could be difficult and if they need space to reflect or take a break that is okay. Facilitators can also offer to speak with the participant in the break or after the session, but with no pressure to share personal histories if they do not wish to. Please feel free to adapt the material to suit the individuals in your group.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

If you think you have observed indicators of modern slavery and exploitation with someone in your community, you can report incidents (or even partial information) to the following services:

Modern Slavery Helpline: 08000 121 700
www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report
(confidential, multilingual guidance from an independent charity)

Local police: 999 in an emergency

Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111
(anonymous crime reporting to an independent charity)

WHY THIS COURSE MATTERS NOW

Over recent years, many of our communities have become increasingly fragmented. We have seen deepening divisions, growing polarisation in public discourse, and rising tensions between different groups of people. In a culture where it can be all too easy to fear, distrust or dismiss those who are different from us, many are asking: how can our communities be brought back together?

How can people with different backgrounds, beliefs and experiences learn to live well together? How can our communities become places where strangers are welcomed, differences are valued, and everyone is treated with dignity rather than being "othered"?

These are not easy questions, but we believe the Bible has profound answers to offer. We believe the gospel brings hope that can transform even the most divided and broken communities, and this course draws attention to what this can look like.

Change does not have to start with legislation, policies or funding. It can begin today, with ordinary people embodying the love of Jesus in their neighbourhoods. In Christ, we find hope for all people and the promise of restoration, reconciliation and healing.

THE WORK OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

OUR MISSION AND BELIEFS

The Clewer Initiative works to mobilise, engage and enable churches, faith communities and local partners to prevent and respond to modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation.

We believe the church is in an incredible position to be at the forefront of anti-slavery action in our communities as it has a presence in every neighbourhood and deep roots in community life.

We believe the church is uniquely placed to mobilise the people, resources, compassion and action needed to identify and prevent modern slavery, offer support and create lasting change.

OUR APPROACH

Rooted in faith, we work alongside churches, faith and community groups to listen, build trust and co-create responses shaped by local needs and opportunities.

By amplifying and connecting faith-led action, we bring local experience and a distinctive Christian voice and perspective into wider conversations, helping to influence the systemic change needed to end modern slavery.

OUR THREE PILLARS OF WORK ARE:

Mobilise
Raise awareness & inspire action

We mobilise communities by raising awareness, building understanding and activating grassroots responses.

Enable
Train, resource & build capacity

We enable stronger local responses, strengthened safeguarding practices and increased knowledge via our training and resource development and delivery.

Collaborate
Build, co-ordinate & support collective action

We collaborate and connect to turn experience and learning into stronger advocacy, influencing national systems, policy and practice to drive lasting change.

Our values are Hope, Courage, Integrity, Excellence, Compassion, Unity - these underpin everything we do, guiding how we pursue our vision and fulfil our purpose to end modern slavery.

WEEK 1 BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITIES

God's original vision for community and my part in it

AIM FOR SESSION

Our aim for today's session is to explore God's original vision for community, using Leviticus 19: 1-18; 29-37 as inspiration. We want to help people think about the communities they are a part of and how God is calling them to treat different people in it, particularly the poor and outsiders. We will consider how modern slavery exists in every community and how strong and healthy communities can help prevent exploitation and identify it quickly if it does occur.

INTRODUCTION *leader to read out loud*

When we see suffering on the news or hear about brokenness in our communities or churches, it is easy to be discouraged. There is so much pain in the world, we can wonder "What is God doing? Is this how it is meant to be? Why does there seem to be pain, abuse and suffering at every turn?" This week, we want to address these heartfelt questions by considering God's original vision for His world.

READ ALOUD

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In the Genesis account of the creation of the world, it says "God saw that it was good" six times. There is no doubt that the world, as it was intended to be, was a good world, full of abundance, health, beauty and order.

The pinnacle of the story is the creation of humankind - first Adam and then Eve. They are placed in the Garden "to work it and take care of it" (2:15) The LORD God is described as "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" - an incredible description of the relationship between God and His people before it goes wrong.

Despite everything we're given, through the grace of choice, we made mistakes, hurt each other and chose greed and power over connection and growth. From the Fall onwards, pain, toil, frustration and death enter the broken world. But God does not give up on his world! The following 1,186 chapters of the Bible trace the history of God's plan to restore His world. God gives His people chance after chance, outlining for them a vision of the sort of people He wants them to be and the sort of communities He wants them to foster. The passage we're about to read in Leviticus are part of God's guidelines to His people. shaping the kind of communities which can transform the lives of people around us through justice and grace, our thoughts and our actions.

Let's spend some time discovering the sort of communities God desires.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD TOGETHER

HOW DOES GOD WANT HIS PEOPLE TO LIVE IN SOCIETY?

Read Leviticus 19: 1-18; 29-37

Using the brainstorm sheet in the Appendix, spend some time thinking about the main ideas in the passage:

- Which verses stand out to you?
- What are the main characteristics of the community?
- Notice the different people who are described in the passage – how should the poor, elderly, young, foreigners, workers, disabled be treated by God's people?

Hint: *respect for parents, caring for the poor by not taking everything, lack of greed, honesty, truth, paying wages, care for deaf and blind, thoughtful living "not putting a stumbling block", justice, lack of favouritism, not endangering neighbour's life, love rather than hatred, no revenge or grudges, not degrading daughter by making her a prostitute, respect for the elderly, care for the foreigner, honesty in work.*

GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

AS YOU THINK ABOUT THIS BEAUTIFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY:

1. Why should God's people treat others in this radical way? What is their motivation? What are God's people to remember about their own history? What is the parallel for Christians? (look at 19:2; 19:34; 19:36 for help)
2. What phrase is repeated 16 times in this chapter? What is the significance of this?

Hint: *"I am the LORD" is the repeated phrase. Almost every command about holiness, justice, care for the poor, love for neighbours, and welcome for foreigners is grounded in God's own character and authority. Because of who God is, we are to live radically different lives. As God's people, we are to reflect his holy character.*

GETTING PERSONAL

WHAT IS MY PART IN THIS COMMUNITY?

This picture of the kind of society God wants to establish is deeply challenging. Notice how the writer of Leviticus says in v3 – "each of you, must..." It starts with individual hearts.

Spend some time in silence considering which verses in this chapter speak to you.

Ask yourself:

- What communities am I a part of?
- How do I relate to these communities?
- What is your attitude towards the "poor and the foreigner"?
- How do these commands challenge you when you consider your interactions and relationships with people at work and at home?

TIME TO SHARE

Turn in pairs and share with one another something you have found challenging or inspiring today.



MAKING THE CONNECTION (HOW THIS RELATES TO MODERN SLAVERY)

Read the definition of modern slavery in the box below

MODERN SLAVERY

Modern slavery is a crime present in every community in the UK. In fact, the Global Slavery Index estimates that there are **OVER 120,000 VICTIMS IN THE UK**, and every year reports of victims to the National Referral Mechanism rise.



The term 'modern slavery' encompasses different forms of slavery and trafficking including sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic servitude and exploitation in criminal activity, such as county lines drug supply, and cannabis cultivation. It shows up in almost every sector of work,and across both rural and urban contexts.

Victims are dehumanised and commoditised, exploited for profit. This becomes very lucrative in that the repeat exploitation of victims generates ongoing profit for offenders, which can result in substantial financial gain.

Victims are forced, coerced or deceived into exploitation, becoming trapped in a situation they cannot escape. Exploiters may be part of a large criminal organisation, a smaller operation or lone offenders. Usually they are highly organised and adept at disguising their activities through trust building, hiding and all sorts of approaches.

Victims of modern slavery come from all different backgrounds and can be any age or gender. Whether British or from abroad, there is usually a 'vulnerability' that exploiters use to target them. **These could include:**

- HOMELESSNESS
- IMMIGRATION STATUS AND/ OR LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES
- DRUG OR ALCOHOL DEPENDENCY
- A DIFFICULT FAMILY BACKGROUND
- MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
- CHILDHOOD/UNDER 18S
- GEOGRAPHIC INSTABILITY
- LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Many of these challenges can be tackled when people are seen and supported in community, which is why strengthening communities can help prevent exploitation. Even when things go wrong, communities can help intervene quickly, or be important places for recovery and restoration.

DISCUSS AS A GROUP:

- How is God's vision for community the opposite of the sort of world in which modern slavery and exploitation exists?
- If people were treated as God outlines in Leviticus 19, how would this counteract the tactics of the criminals?

Hint: *criminals target vulnerable people. If communities are caring for the elderly, disabled, poor, disadvantaged, foreigners as outlined in Leviticus 19, it gives criminal networks less opportunity to target, groom, coerce and exploit.*

A LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE

Watch together the short 5-minute interview clip from our podcast with Rt Revd Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading. She shares more about beautiful communities including her passion for ministering to the most vulnerable in society and her experience of prison ministry and reconciliation work.



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FINAL REFLECTION AND PRAYER

- What struck you from the podcast clip?
- What one thing would you like to do in response to this week's content?

Heavenly Father, you say "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." We praise you that you are good, true and just and you call us to live lives that reflect your holiness. Help us Lord, over the coming weeks, to learn what it might look like to live distinctively in the communities where you have placed us, and to express your love and justice better. In Jesus' name and for His glory,
Amen.

NEXT STEPS

DURING THE WEEK:

- Listen to or watch our week 1 podcast in full
- Read Jennifer's story (below) to learn more about a Clewer friend who has responded to God's calling to show love and concern for the marginalised.
- Learn more about modern slavery by watching a modern slavery survivor story on our YouTube channel



JENNIFER'S STORY



Jennifer's journey began more than 20 years ago when she was teaching in a Further Education college. Many of the students she met had low self-esteem and low aspirations and the goal of the college was to keep them in education and away from crime. In 2016, she began volunteering with Surrey Police as an Appropriate Adult, attending custody suites with a child or vulnerable adult who has been detained and had no family member to support them. Through this experience, she saw that many of the people she was accompanying had been coerced into committing offences. They were rarely willing to speak up and share their story - living in fear of others who 'controlled' them.

In 2019, alongside Chris Elliott, she began pioneering anti-slavery action in the Reigate Archdeanery. She had seen modern slavery and county lines in Surrey police stations and knew something had to be done to raise awareness in churches and communities. With her background in teaching, she was excited about using her skills to deliver modern slavery training to people in the Archdeanery. The work has since grown and she now works as a Modern Slavery Advisor under the banner of Southwark Against Modern Slavery, championing the cause across the Diocese.

Through Southwark Against Modern Slavery, she aims to empower and equip people to report anything that doesn't feel or look 'quite right', knowing that the public are the eyes and ears of the community and a key resource for the Police.

Jennifer has found herself speaking to safeguarding panels, fire service staff, local politicians as well as churches and other faith groups all over the Diocese. She enjoys running The Clewer Initiative's Hidden Voices course with groups, encouraging them to take responsibility for local efforts and, in this way, multiplying the work.

She also loves mentoring an NRM survivor through the organisation, Strength & Stem, walking alongside and caring for a woman through the ups and downs. Witnessing the recovery pathway firsthand also inspires and motivates her when she delivers training as she sees that there is potential for individuals to rebuild their lives post-exploitation.

As a Christian, Jennifer feels called to serve the people around her, embodying the love of Christ. She is challenged by Jesus' teaching in the Parable of the Good Samaritan and his instruction that "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). She is passionate about the opportunity churches have to be the hands and feet of Jesus and ask the question, "how can we meet people at their immediate point of need?"

WEEK 2 UNITED COMMUNITIES

Communities where everyone is valued, united and welcome

AIM FOR SESSION

Our aim for today's session is to explore God's vision for united communities. Using Galatians 3, Ephesians 2 and I Corinthians 12 for inspiration, we will think about our unity in Christ and how that changes the way we view people. We also consider how church social action projects connect with people on the edge of society and the strategic role they have in spotting potential exploitation.

INTRODUCTION *leader to read out loud*

Last week, we considered the vision for society that God outlines in the Old Testament – a community of justice, compassion, care for the vulnerable, generosity, holiness, and kindness to foreigners. We also thought about our individual part in this vision and how our salvation story - one of being rescued and adopted – inspires us to treat others with grace and generosity. Today, we fast forward to the New Testament and see how the church, following the teachings of Jesus, put God's vision for community into practice in a new era.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD TOGETHER

OUR SHARED IDENTITY

Read Galatians 3: 26-28 and Ephesians 2:13-22

Using the brainstorm sheet in the Appendix, spend some time thinking about the main ideas in the passage:

- How are God's people described in Galatians 3?
- What unites God's people in Ephesians 2?
- What does Paul say God's people have in common in Ephesians 2, even if they have lots of other differences?
- How does Paul describe God's people in Ephesians 2: 19-22? What different metaphors / ideas / terms are used?

Hint: *notice the language of citizenship / foreigners / aliens as well as the imagery of being God's household / building / holy temple / dwelling place. Look at Jesus' purpose – to create one new humanity and bring reconciliation and peace.*

READ ALOUD

Paul writes in the book of Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In fact, through Jesus, people from all backgrounds and contexts can be united and reconciled.

In New Testament times this was radical as Jews and Gentiles had very little in common and often despised each other. But Paul says in Ephesians 2: "He himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two ... "

In Jesus, all people can have access to the same Heavenly Father through the blood of Jesus and the work of the Spirit.

Therefore, we are to view people in a radically different way! "No longer [as] foreigners and strangers" but as "fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."

This is the glue we are looking for in our churches and communities! In fact, not only do we view people differently but in Christ, we actually belong to one another! The New Testament talks about how we are the body of Christ, each with a unique role and purpose. 1 Corinthians 12 is clear on how this transforms the way we view one another. There is no place for looking down on people or feeling superior. We all need one another: "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it."

Whatever someone's story or background or gifting, they are needed in the body of Christ. Our job is to communicate this in the way we treat one another and how we organise our church.

This is particularly relevant in church social action projects such as food banks, community groceries, baby banks, warm spaces, night shelters where volunteers and staff come face-to-face with some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

How can we show each person who we interact with that we see them, not principally in terms of their need, but as someone who bears the image of God and has something to contribute?

While approaching someone with the question "What can we do for you?" gives autonomy in someone's support needs, we can go further by discovering who someone really is and the value God has already placed upon their life. Christian outreach begins not with the assumption that 'we possess' and 'they lack', but with the recognition that we meet one another as people made in the image of God, each bringing gifts as well as needs. Empowering someone through their ideas, experiences and skills may also result in a new opportunity to build up your community.

GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR CHURCHES?

- How can our churches better reflect the reality that everyone is equal in Jesus?
- If someone was to walk into your church gathering this Sunday, would they see a group of people who are united and accept one another, whatever the differences?
- How welcoming is your church to the outsider? What could you do to remove obstacles for an outsider?
- Where are the touchpoints each week where outsiders come into your church? What social action projects does your church run? How could you extend love, welcome and acceptance to them and show there are no divisions or hierarchies?

MAKING THE CONNECTION (HOW THIS RELATES TO MODERN SLAVERY)

Read the box below and discover how church volunteers can play a key role in spotting signs of modern slavery.

THE CHURCH AT THE FOREFRONT OF MODERN SLAVERY ACTIVISM



Churches run or host thousands of social action projects including food banks, community groceries, baby banks, soup kitchens, warm spaces, night shelters, toddler groups and youth groups.

At these projects, volunteers and staff come face-to-face with some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Vulnerability, in its many forms, can increase a person's risk of exploitation or getting trapped in modern slavery.

It is therefore vital that staff and volunteers who work in community support projects feel confident to recognise and respond to exploitation. They are in a unique position to notice changes in someone's circumstances, behaviour or relationships and with the right knowledge can recognise a situation that might otherwise go unnoticed.

A few years ago, a volunteer with Hope for Justice helped the authorities uncover hundreds of victims of modern slavery. Having received modern slavery awareness training, the volunteer recognised signs of exploitation in individuals at a soup kitchen and reported their concerns.

The volunteer's actions helped trigger 'Operation Fort', one of the UK's largest modern slavery investigations, that ultimately identified more than 400 victims and resulted in eight perpetrators receiving significant prison sentences.

It is a powerful example of how community and church social action projects have a vital role when it comes to reaching out, protecting and supporting the vulnerable.

GETTING PERSONAL

Turn in pairs and share with one another something you have found challenging or inspiring today.

A LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE

Watch together the short 5-minute interview clip from our podcast with Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Bishop of Worcester, as he talks about some of the challenges and unexpected blessings of churches engaging in social action.



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REFLECTION AND PRAYER

- What struck you from the podcast clip?
- What one thing would you like to do in response to this week's content?

Dear God, We praise you that in Jesus, all differences are gone and we are members of your family, joined together to become a dwelling in which you live by your Spirit. Help us to treat everyone in our church as brothers and sisters. We particularly pray for the people who come into our churches through social action projects. May they feel valued and welcomed and know something of the love of Christ. In Jesus' name,
Amen.

NEXT STEPS

DURING THE WEEK:

- Listen to or watch our week 2 podcast in full
- Read Selina's story (below) and learn more about a church that has used its building to support thousands of local people
- Think about training: Are the volunteers at your church social action projects equipped to recognise signs of modern slavery and know how to respond and refer any concerns they have? Could you encourage volunteers you know to complete the **Modern Slavery and Human trafficking e-module on the Church of England's Safeguarding Portal**?
- Review our **Spot the Signs** material – do you know what to look out for?
- Download some **posters** from The Clewer Initiative and display them at your social action projects – we have posters that are designed for volunteers and posters for potential victims. Make sure you display both so that everyone is educated about modern slavery and exploitation.

SELINA'S STORY



In January 2014, the new vicar of St Francis church in Coventry announced to the congregation that she wanted to start a work club to help those in the local area who were facing unemployment. Selina Read was on maternity leave and thought it could be something she could help with.

The work club met in the main church building, offering support to job seekers, two mornings a week. Prior to the work club, the church building was only used on Sunday mornings. Selina and the vicar met with individuals to help them write CVs and look for jobs together. Over time, more people began coming along, with issues that were much wider than employment including bills they couldn't pay, forms they didn't understand or school applications, so the team extended their opening hours and broadened their services.

Selina explains: "the local job centre was very interested in what we were doing and were focusing a lot on helping job seekers find work experience and volunteering opportunities. Together we put together a support package where we provided training support to get people "job ready" and volunteering placements within the church such as helping to maintain our grounds or run the cafe. In 2019, the team made the decision to become a new charity - St Francis Employability – still with strong links to the church but independent in finances and governance.

St Francis Employability now offers support to people with a multitude of problems including debt management and financial maximisation, homelessness and addictions. They welcome people into the church building, Monday to Friday, offering breakfast and lunch, tea, coffee and snacks, free of charge, at a cafe manned by volunteers. They have a food bank, social supermarket, exercises classes for the elderly, craft clubs, allotments, a work club including awareness of work rights, skills courses, ESOL courses, computer area and an Ofsted registered creche so that children can be looked after while parents access support or English lessons.

Selina shares: "Fifty per cent of the people that come to St Francis are Muslim. They happily come into the church to get support and that is quite unique. We don't preach at people but you can't help but see you're in a church, surrounded by Christians helping. Every morning, we ring a bell and pray in a side room, and people are welcome to join us if they want."

Selina can't quite believe how far they have come. "If you'd told me 12 years ago I would be running a 30-person charity, I wouldn't have believed it! It all starts with baby steps and you do make mistakes along the way. You learn through trying. We've grown organically, seeing opportunities and responding. I would strongly encourage anybody who's got an empty church building to think about doing something like this, because of the amazing impact you can have."