

York Minster

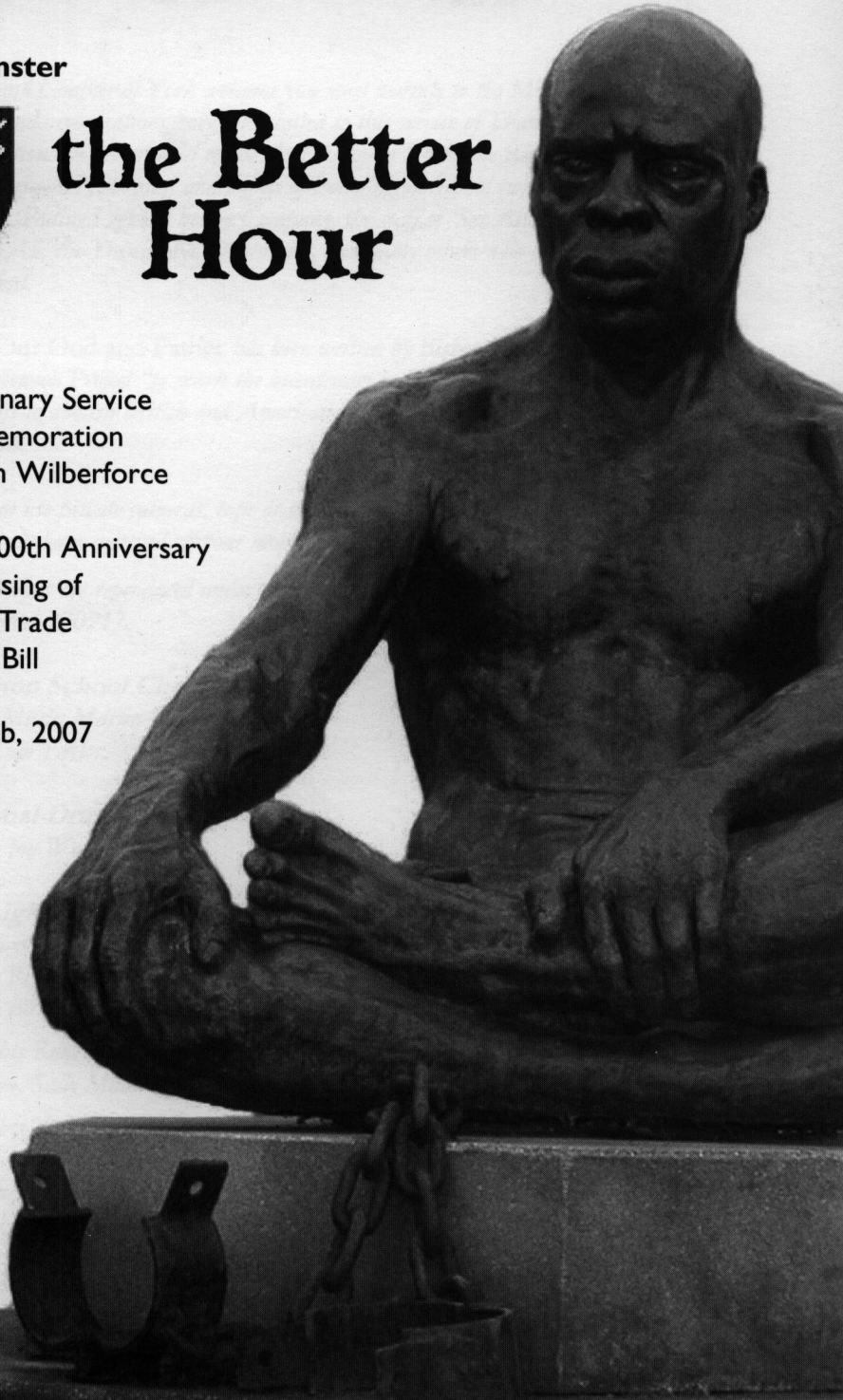


# the Better Hour

A Bicentenary Service  
in Commemoration  
of William Wilberforce

and the 200th Anniversary  
of the passing of  
the Slave Trade  
Abolition Bill

Sun 25 Feb, 2007  
2.00pm





*The Dean and Chapter of York welcome you most warmly to the Minster. Many individuals and organisations have contributed to this service of Thanksgiving and Commemoration: we are grateful to the Archbishop of York, the Right Honourable William Hague MP, the staff and pupils of Pocklington School (where William Wilberforce was a pupil), Riding Lights Theatre Company, the staff of 'Set All Free', and particularly Mrs Linda Ali, the Transglobal Drummers, and many others who have given encouragement.*

*The hymn Our God and Father has been written by Bishop Timothy Dudley Smith for The John Newton Project "to mark the bicentenary in 2007 of legislation by Parliament and Congress to abolish British and American participation in the slave trade", and is used by permission.*

*Please do not use private cameras, tape or video recorders before or during the service. Please ensure that you have switched off your mobile telephone.*

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### ***Pocklington School Choir***

*Director of Music: Martin Kettlewell*

*Organist: Tom Taylor.*

### ***Transglobal Drummers***

*Directed by Jon Ward.*

### ***Riding Lights Theatre Company***

*Extracts from African Snow by Murray Watts read by Israel Oyelumade (Equiano in the Theatre Royal York production of the play) together with Fred Denno (Newton) and Tom Peters (Wilberforce). Directed by Paul Burbridge.*

*Riding Lights Roughshod Theatre Company: Claire Brine, Paul Kissack, Emily Lawson, Junade Khan, Sally Maddison.*

*Riding Lights Youth Theatre directed by Paul Birch, Education Officer.*

*At 1.50am the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, the Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor of York and her consort, the Sheriff of York and the Sheriff's Lady, and the High Sheriff of North Yorkshire will be welcomed at the West Doors by the Dean and members of the Dean and Chapter of York.*

*Please stand as they are accompanied to their seats, taking your seat when they are seated.*

## Opening Hymn

1. The kingdom of God  
is justice and joy;  
for Jesus restores  
what sin would destroy.  
God's power and glory  
in Jesus we know;  
and here and hereafter  
the kingdom shall grow

2. The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace;  
the captives are freed,  
the sinners find place,  
the outcasts are welcomed  
God's banquet to share;  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.

3. The kingdom of God  
is challenge and choice;  
believe the good news,  
repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
brought Christ to the cross;  
our crisis of judgement  
for gain or for loss.

4. God's kingdom is come,  
the gift and the goal;  
in Jesus begun,  
in heaven made whole.  
The heirs of the kingdom  
shall answer his call;  
and all things cry 'Glory!'  
to God all in all.

*Words: Bryn Rees (1911 - 1983)*

*Tune: HANOVER, by William Croft (1678 - 1727)*

## Introduction

*The Dean of York says*

On the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February 1807 the Bill to abolish the trade in slaves was debated in the House of Commons. At 4.00 in the morning William Wilberforce was cheered to the echo, and left the House with tears streaming down his face, his long struggle completed. As the people of Yorkshire, whom Wilberforce represented in Parliament, we have gathered to commemorate his work and the successful vote on that February night. This begins a series of commemorations across the world, which will find a focus next month on the anniversary of the date in March 1807 when the Bill became law.

Today we will give thanks for William Wilberforce's Christian commitment, his vision for a redeemed humanity free from worldly oppression, and his vision and tenacity in fighting for the abolition of the slave trade against overwhelming odds. We will celebrate those many others who supported his fight and carried on his work, so that just before he died he was able to rejoice that slavery itself was abolished in the British Empire.

And we shall consider our own day, and commit ourselves to ensuring that overt and subtle slavery in all its forms will be rooted out from the world.

“They charge me with fanaticism” said William Wilberforce. “If to be feelingly alive to the sufferings of my fellow creatures is to be a fanatic, I am one of the most incurable fanatics ever permitted to be at large”.

*Please kneel or sit*

### **Opening Prayer**

*Linda Ali, Deputy Chair of USPG, and member of the Set All Free Executive, says*

God our deliverer,  
you have brought freedom to all people  
in your Son Jesus Christ,  
and have commanded us to act justly and to love mercy;  
as we celebrate the fight against slavery,  
the abolition of the trade in slaves  
and the emancipation of many who were oppressed,  
help us, after the example of William Wilberforce,  
to have compassion for all,  
and work for the freedom of all the children of God,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Please sit*

### **Remembering**

*Members of the Riding Lights Youth Theatre read three contemporary accounts of slavery from To Be A Slave, by Julius Lester .*

*During each reading a candle is lit on the altar platform.*

*After the readings Riding Lights Theatre Company present an extract from African Snow. William Wilberforce is here shown meeting John Newton.*

*After the drama please kneel or sit.*

## Prayers of Penitence

*The Dean of York says*

Where we have failed to love, and have loved to hurt:

**Forgive us, and heal us.**

Where we have scorned difference  
and have been indifferent to those in need:

**Forgive us, and heal us.**

Where we have spoken harsh words to others,  
and have been quick to take offence ourselves:

**Forgive us, and heal us.**

Where we have prayed and sung about injustice,  
and have ignored the injustice around us:

**Forgive us, and heal us.**

Merciful God, unlike us, you are true to your word.

When we cry to you in sorrow and repentance,  
you hear our cries and are swift to forgive.

**For your faithful love we praise you.**

If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation  
Through him our sins are forgiven.

May the Father of all mercies  
cleanse you from your sins,  
and restore you in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen. Thanks be to God**

*Please sit*

### Anthem

*The Choir of Pocklington School sings Steal Away, from A Child of our Time, by Michael Tippett.*

### Reading

*Siân Smith, Head Girl, Pocklington School reads Genesis 45: 1-16.*

## Hymn

Our God and Father, whose eternal mind  
breathed life into our dust and gave us birth,  
and of one blood created humankind  
to live in peace as fellow-heirs of earth:  
for all the long-oppressed in this our day,  
whose night is starless, hear us as we pray.

Our Saviour Christ once chose a servant's part,  
maligned, rejected and unjustly tried;  
teach us, who follow him, to lay to heart  
what love he set on those for whom he died.  
Before his cross, who rose and lives and saves,  
we fellow-sinners kneel as fellow-slaves.

Your Name we praise for those who fought and won  
to drive the slavers' traffic from the sea;  
who spent themselves until the task was done,  
who broke the bonds and set the captives free:  
on such a cause, on such a victor's crown,  
the stars of heaven shone more brightly down.

Hear now our prayers for those who suffer still  
oppression, terror, misery and pain;  
give to your ransomed church the strength of will  
to frame a world where peace and justice reign:  
where those on earth rejoice with those above,  
free fellow-children of a Father's love.

*Words © Timothy Dudley-Smith.  
Tune: SONG 1*

*Please sit*

## Remembering

*Riding Lights Theatre Company present a second extract from African Snow. Here William Wilberforce brings together the freed slave Olaudah Equiano and the former slave trader John Newton.*

*Please remain seated*

## **Anthem**

*The Choir of Pocklington School sings Deep River from A Child of our Time by Michael Tippett.*

*Please remain seated.*

## **Sermon**

*The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr John Sentamu, Lord Archbishop of York*

*Please remain seated.*

## **Drumming**

*The Transglobal Drummers perform Gahu, from the Ewe region of Ghana. It symbolizes flight and escape, and the song and dance both feature strong resonances of the slave trade, with some French language, some 18th Century dance steps and traditional Ghanaian moves.*

## **Hymn**

There's a wideness in God's mercy  
like the wideness of the sea;  
there's a kindness in his justice,  
which is more than liberty.  
There is no place where earth's sorrows  
are more felt than in heaven;  
there is no place where earth's failings  
have such kind judgment given.

For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of man's mind;  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.  
But we make his love too narrow  
by false limits of our own;  
and we magnify his strictness  
with a zeal he will not own.



There is plentiful redemption  
in the blood that has been shed;  
there is joy for all the members  
in the sorrows of the Head.  
There is grace enough for thousands  
of new worlds as great as this;  
there is room for fresh creations  
in that upper home of bliss.

If our love were but more simple,  
we should take him at his word;  
and our life would be all gladness  
in the joy of Christ our Lord.

*Words by F.W. Faber (altd) 1814 - 1863*  
*Music: CORVEDALE by Maurice Bevan*

### Reading

*The Right Honourable William Hague, M.P., reads "A letter written to William Wilberforce by the Freeholders of the county of York' on his retirement as a Member of Parliament from the seat of Yorkshire after twenty-eight years' service in October 1812".*

Sir,

Although the thanks of the freeholders of this county for your eminent public services have been voted by a most numerous and respectable meeting held at York, we trust the intimate connexion which you have ever maintained with the place of your birth, will justify a claim to the privilege of expressing our peculiar approbation and regard. In common with a large portion of Yorkshire freeholders, we deeply regret the necessity of your retirement to a station of comparative leisure; still some consolation is derived from the assurance that the benefit of your talents will not be withdrawn from the country at a period of unprecedented danger and difficulty. It were on our parts a vain attempt to review the important events of your political life, or to express an opinion upon each; but we can truly assert our firm conviction, that your conduct on all occasions has been regulated by principles of true and honourable independence.

We cannot however pass unnoticed your indefatigable exertions to effect the abolition of an execrable traffic, alike inconsistent with British feeling and Christian principle – exertions which have enrolled your name among the illustrious benefactors of mankind, and the latest posterity will pronounce it with the reverence due to exalted virtue. To your perseverance through a series of years, this country is indebted for a practical application to others of those great principles of liberty, which are its pride and boast. The stain upon its character has, through your means, been effaced: for this, Britain owes a debt of eternal gratitude .

As freeholders of Yorkshire resident in and near Hull, we indulge in the grateful feelings of an honest pride; we exult in the reflection that the illustrious name of that incorruptible patriot...Wilberforce adorns our records and sheds lustre on this the place of his nativity.

Among other subjects of praise, it is not the least that on retiring from the representation of this county after a faithful service of twenty-eight years and possessed of the influence which such a station must necessarily command, you have not during that period accepted of place, pension, or rank, and have acquired no other than the distinguished title of the 'Friend of Man'.

*Please kneel or sit*

### **Thanksgiving and Commitment**

*Israel Oyelumade, the actor who has portrayed Olandah Equiano in this service, says*

We give thanks for the life and witness of all the abolitionists, black and white; for those who led resistance; for those who stood up for what they saw to be right. We remember especially William Wilberforce, Olaudah Equiano, Thomas Clarkson and Ignatius Sancho, among others, we name Granville Sharpe, Abraham Lincoln, Mary Seacole, Mahatma Ghandi and Nelson Mandela

and all those known and unknown who have worked for freedom and peace in the world.

**We are all brothers and sisters.**

We give thanks for the abundance of the Earth.

May we learn to share its riches equitably.

**We are all brothers and sisters.**

We give thanks for freedom of speech and action.  
 May we learn to use that freedom for the good of all.  
 May we not seek to restrict the freedom of those with whom we disagree.

**We are all brothers and sisters.**

We give thanks for the opportunity to work for a living wage.  
 May we learn to be generous with our sufficiency.

**We are all brothers and sisters.**

We give thanks for the freedom to elect our representatives.  
 May we learn to exercise that freedom wisely without fear or prejudice.

**We are all brothers and sisters.**

We have the plenty of the Earth.  
 Help us to appreciate its riches,  
 help us to conserve its resources for the generations yet to be born;  
 let us rejoice in the fruitfulness of the world.

**Gracious and liberating God**

**Lift us beyond the burdens of pain and guilt**

**Build our memories**

**into life-giving resolutions**

**Give us the vision of a new creation**

**Strengthen us to act**

**for justice and human dignity**

**And set all free.**

*The Set All Free Prayer*

**Song**

**Song**



Al - le, al - le, al - le, lu - ia!



Al - le, al - le, al - le, lu - ia!



Al - le, al - le, al - le, lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia! \_\_\_\_\_

I am the bread of life, feed on me  
I am the bread of life, feed on me  
I am the bread of life, feed on me. Alleluia  
*Alle alle alle...*

I am the one true vine, grow in me...

I am the way the truth, follow me...

I am the rock of ages, cleft for you...

I am the resurrection, and the life...

*Traditional Jamaican, adapted by and © John Sentamu.*

*Please kneel or sit*

## **Blessing**

*The Archbishop of York*

*Please sit*

## **Dismissal**

*Members of the Riding Lights Roughshod Theatre Company, accompanied by the Transglobal Drummers, challenge us from the words of Jesus in Matthew Chapter 25*

*A short silence is kept.*

*Please stand when the organ starts to play, and the processions leave.*

## **Organ voluntary**

*Carillon de Westminster Louis Vierne (1870-1937)*

*Please visit the specially mounted exhibition in the North Transept.*

## Organisations associated with this service



### WISE: Research on slavery

WISE – the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation – is a multidisciplinary research institute at the University of Hull. Based in a beautifully refurbished building next to Wilberforce’s birthplace (now the Wilberforce House Museum), a research team is exploring issues related to the history of slavery, particularly the transatlantic slave trade, and to the growth of slavery in the contemporary world. The Institute is also increasingly a community resource for work around issues of ‘race’ and racism. It recently hosted an event celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ghanaian independence. The Ghanaian symbol *sankofa* which is now associated with WISE following the formal opening by the President of Ghana last summer, means 'you can always undo your mistakes' For further information on its work contact

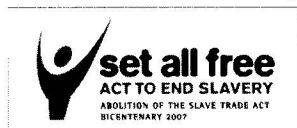


**Professor Gary Craig**, *Associate Director*, at [g.craig@hull.ac.uk](mailto:g.craig@hull.ac.uk)



### Churches Together in England

Churches Together in England has sponsored a project called Set All Free, to commemorate the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 2007 in ways which challenge modern society to engage with Christian values. The project aims to highlight how the abolitionists’ values can transform our relationships on an individual, community and society level. Much of the worship material used today has been developed or gathered by Set All Free. [www.setallfree.net](http://www.setallfree.net)



**The Transglobal Drummers** are based in York and started life at one of the City of York Council's Performing Arts Centres. In 2004 they fulfilled their ambition of travelling to Ghana to learn traditional Ghanaian drumming.

**Pocklington School** was founded during the reign of King Henry VIII. Set in rural Yorkshire it is a co-educational boarding and day school of first class educational excellence, and of strong Christian values.

For nearly 500 years the school has educated young people with a broad range of abilities and interests. Many have gone on to achieve national and international recognition in a diverse range of professions.

Of its former pupils, none is more distinguished than William Wilberforce. Wilberforce wrote his first public letter against the 'odious traffic in human flesh' when he was a fourteen year old at Pocklington School. The school will in this year honour Wilberforce's myriad achievements by erecting a full size bronze statue of Wilberforce the schoolboy.

**Riding Lights Theatre Company.** Initially a community theatre project founded in York in 1977, today Riding Lights is touring up to three diverse companies simultaneously throughout the UK and abroad. The Company is recognised both as a pioneer in reinstating the value of theatre in Christian communication and for significant original and artistic achievement.

The Company has written devised and produced a wide range of original plays for stage and radio, as well as educational shows, TV scripts, musicals and innumerable sketches throughout its 25 year history. In addition, it has been acclaimed for mainstream productions of classic plays and memorable stage adaptations of other literature.

The vision of Riding Lights Theatre Company is

- To stage high quality productions of both new and classic theatre
- To reach a broad audience with work of lasting value
- To reawaken a strong dramatic tradition within the christian community

[www.ridinglights.org](http://www.ridinglights.org)



YORK THEATRE ROYAL and RIDING LIGHTS THEATRE  
COMPANY present the world premiere of

# AFRICAN

# SNOW

by Murray Watts, directed by Paul Burbridge  
music by Ben Okafor

The epic story of two men - Olaudah Equiano  
and John Newton - cast from opposite sides  
into the hell of the slave trade.

Marking the 200th anniversary of the Abolition  
of the Slave Trade Act, and campaigning for  
the abolition of modern slaveries worldwide.

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Dr John Sentamu  
Archbishop of York

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