



THE WAY

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FROM THE CHAPLAIN

William Wilberforce is the third of our House Patrons being featured this term. He provides another outstanding and inspirational example of a Christian who faithfully served God and his community

Wilberforce was born into England's privileged class in 1759. He became a member of British Parliament at the youthful age of 21, while still a student at Cambridge University. His was a life of privilege and power, but he had a clear vision to serve which was shaped by the Christian faith he came to own in his 20's.



The movie *Amazing Grace* portrays the life of Wilberforce, who fought for decades to transform the thinking of England's ruling class around the practice of the human slave trade. He was compelled to act after having the reality of this evil activity explained to him. His response in sharing this with others was: *"Having seen all this you can choose to look the other way, but you can never say again, 'I did not know.'"*

Wilberforce set his course of action to abolish slavery. He and a growing number of 'abolitionists' were convinced that all people were made in God's image, they had infinite dignity and were born free from being owned as the property of another. In this sense, he shared Amy Carmichael's concern for the basic human rights of every individual.

Perseverance is one of our College positive learning values and Wilberforce demonstrated this in the extreme. It took 20 years until the Slave Trade Act 1807 was passed, stopping all new slavery. It took another 20 years until the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 made illegal all slavery. It was his

life's work, and he died only a short time later at the age of 74.

William Wilberforce is an inspiration for later campaigns to bring social justice to the underprivileged and disadvantaged, even to our day. He deeply believed that followers of Jesus could and should have a positive influence in shaping society for good. He was very generous with his time and money in a number of causes, such as educating the poor through the establishment of 'Sunday Schools.' He was passionate about animal welfare, establishing the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He was also committed to the work of overseas missions, being a founding member of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).

Wilberforce was a man of deep Christian faith and action. He persevered in serving to change the course of history. Such faith and action are needed today in the midst of social change where the value of all human life is still brought into question.

Mr Matthew Richards
Assistant Chaplain
