

# **UNITED IN LOCKDOWN**, united in prayer. For those of us still in lockdown – living with restricted freedom and heightened fear, suffering anxiety or anger, feeling helplessness and despair. Together let us pray, let us act and let us declare to one another – **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

***“Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”***  
**Matthew 6:9-13 (ESV)**

Prisoners know all about lockdown in ways which are far starker than the ‘stay at home’ experience people have lived during the viral pandemic. However, beyond the walls of prison people of all ages have had to learn how to navigate uncertainty and many people feel fearful, bewildered and out of control. In past months there was a loss of freedom to be with loved ones, even when at the point of death. For some people there has been overwhelming pain and sadness. Some people have felt lonely and isolated whilst others have longed for space away from other people. All of this is experienced within the walls of prisons 365 days a year.

This Prisons Week as we pray for all those connected with the criminal justice system in any way, including all prison staff and families of prisoners as well as prisoners themselves, let us not talk of social distancing but rather of physical distancing. Let us pray for social connection and restored relationship and an openness to the generous love of God who longs to draw close to every individual person, treasured and known by name.

We pray that amid both places of brokenness and beauty there might be a discovery of inner freedom and peace which is rooted in the love, hope and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and present through the power of the Holy Spirit, never locked down.

– Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester, Church of England Bishop for Women’s Prisons

“There are many things we take for granted and it is only when we lose it, we realise the value it had. Due to Covid-19 a lot of people are now experiencing the loss of work and, at the same time, the loss of liberty. These two factors are bad enough but combined they risk diminishing the self worth of the individuals concerned. A lot of people can now relate to where I have been. In the same way I can now relate to their fears and insecurity.”

– Former prisoner, March 2020

**SUNDAY: THE PRISONS WEEK PRAYER** ***Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day. Amen.***

**MONDAY: PRAYING WITH PRISONERS** – Spirit of grace and truth, we ask for your constant presence through the days, weeks, months and years of imprisonment. For your steady refusal to be shut out by cell walls, steel doors or reluctant and stubborn hearts. Break through the fear and isolation, shatter all pretence and deceit, guide our thoughts and actions, setting before us the example of Jesus the prisoner. Bring us face to face with the unlimited and sacrificial love of God for all his children, so that we can know we are not alone.

*United in prayer, we bow our heads to say together, Our Father...*

**TUESDAY: PRAYING WITH THE VICTIMS OF CRIME** – Comforter Spirit, ease the distress and suffering of those whose lives are locked down because of crimes committed against them. Move through others to bring reassurance that they are not alone, physically or in the depths of their souls. Unlock doors that reveal a path of healing through hurt and injustice to a more peaceful place, where trust and confidence can be gradually restored.

*United in prayer, we bring our wounds as we say together, Our Father...*

**WEDNESDAY: PRAYING WITH FAMILIES** – Spirit of life and light, walk with us through the confusion and pain of lives forever changed by crime and imprisonment. Give us the strength to bear feelings of anger and betrayal; and to cope with the unfamiliar and frightening. Show us how to bridge the gulf which keeps us apart, revive relationships and bring reconciliation. Take our fears away and give us peace, that we can know that we're not alone.

*United in prayer, we bring our sadness and our hopes as we say together, Our Father ...*

**THURSDAY: PRAYING WITH COMMUNITIES** – Spirit of God, who dwells within people and places, help us magnify your kindness and goodness to overcome ignorance, alienation and hostility, to be able to see each other as people created and connected in God's image. Humble us by your power that we might have the courage to come together, physically distanced but united in purpose, called by name to serve God and our neighbours. Pour your gifts upon us, so that we can fulfil your trust in us to do our part, that your kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven.

*United in prayer, we bring ourselves and offer our lives as we say together, Our Father...*

**FRIDAY: PRAYING WITH THOSE WORKING IN PRISON** – Spirit of refuge and renewal, be alongside all who are called to work in prisons. Give daily strength to serve courageously and faithfully through the continuing constraints of lockdown. Be present in the bringing of order, compassion, food, comfort, and humanity to all held in custody. Sustain and enable us in times of exhaustion and weariness through the sureness of your love and power.

*United in prayer, watch over us as we say together, Our Father...*

**SATURDAY: PRAYING WITH THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM** – Spirit of wisdom and mercy, lead those responsible for exercising justice in the way of truth; bring discernment, fair minded judgement and a willingness to confront injustice as they consider the lives of others. In every role and place of work through the whole criminal justice system, guide and empower people to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit.

*United in prayer, we stand before you Jesus, our Judge, Redeemer and friend as we say together, Our Father...*

For over forty years Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature for the Christian community to use as they pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons: prisoners and victims, their families, their communities, those working and volunteering in prisons and the criminal justice system. Please pray each day during Prisons Week but also ask yourself whether there is one thing that you as an individual, or as a church, can do to help any of the people that you are praying for.

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