

We pray for all who work in the justice system, in the courts, and in the police service, and in victim support organisations.

We also pray for those who are prisoners of conscience. We remember those, around the world, who are detained in prison because of their Christian witness.

### **The Prisons Week Prayer**

Lord, you offer freedom to all people.

We pray for men and women 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.

Source: [www.prisonswEEK.org](http://www.prisonswEEK.org) (10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021)

**Hymn StF 239** *Sent by the Lord* or alternatively

**Hymn H&P 783** *Thy kingdom come, O God*

### **Blessing**

May God the Father hold you securely

as the Saviour walks alongside you,

and may the Spirit of God give light on your path ahead:

so may God's blessing be with you this day and always. Amen.



Thank you to Rev Alan Coustick for preparing our worship sheet this week.

## **Darlington District Worship at Home 10 October 2021**



### **Call to Worship**

Let the name of the Lord be praised,  
both now and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
the name of the Lord is to be praised. *Psalm 113: 2,3*

### **Hymn StF 357 / H&P 264** *Jesus the name high over all*

### **Prayer**

We set aside time to worship God.

Some of us bring doubts and uncertainties: we come to find our faith renewed as we join with our sisters and brothers in the community of faith.

Some of us have been caught up in the busy-ness of each day, our minds distracted by many urgent tasks: we are glad of space to be still and re-discover God's presence in the heart of life.

Some of us have felt very close to God in recent days: we come to be together with others as we worship and praise.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Introduction**

This week is marked as Prisons Week. Some familiar scriptures are heard differently when read in worship in a prison chapel.

### **Reading - Psalm 142**

### **Prayer of confession and absolution**

You came to us, but we did not recognise you.

You blessed us, but we did not thank you.

You commanded us, but we did not obey you.

You called us, but we did not follow.

**Forgive us and help us.**

You forgave us, but we did not offer forgiveness to those who had hurt us.

You accepted us, but we have not reached out to welcome the strangers who come among us.

You have given yourself in love for us, but we have not loved one another as you have loved us.

**Forgive us and help us.**

So give us grace to receive your forgiveness;  
give us courage to begin afresh;  
give us wisdom to discern the way that leads to life:  
in Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

**Reading - [Matthew 25: 31-40](#)**

**Reflection**

In this Prisons Week, I want to explore how we hold together the punishment of criminals and the forgiveness of sinners.

I can believe that a man or woman is forgiven by God and still feel that it is right for them to be punished by society. And sometimes those who are most repentant are those most willing to accept society's right to punish them.

When we use the word CRIMINALS, we are drawing in our mind's eye a dividing line through humanity, putting the majority of people (usually including ourselves) on one side and the criminals on the other side. The criminal is the person who has been found guilty of criminal offence by a court.

When we use the word SINNERS we are drawing a line in a different direction. We recognise that we all stand under the judgement of God.

In both cases we can use the word OFFENDER. Before God, we are all offenders. We have all fallen short of what God requires of us ([Romans 3: 23](#)).

We can then ask the question, Who is offended?

The same action has been  
an offence against God  
an offence against the victims and the victim's family  
an offence against society.

Each offended party has the right to forgive but we cannot presume to offer forgiveness on behalf of others who have been offended against.

To accept forgiveness implies the recognition of having offended. The divine forgiveness means that there is no barrier between the offender and God on account of the offence. And prayer, worship, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion may be as much a part of a prisoner's relationship with God as it is for any of us.

When I worship with those who are in prison, I have to recognise that I stand alongside others as a sinner before God. The person in prison may have something to teach me about repentance and about the experience of God's forgiveness.

**Hymn StF 171 / H&P 82 *Hark the glad sound***

**Prayers of Intercession**

In this Prisons Week, we bring before God our own experiences of being victims of crime or of standing alongside victims: our experience (direct or indirect) of the prison system: and that of people we know who have been convicted of crime.

We pray for those who are in prison, whether on remand awaiting trial or serving a court sentence as punishment. We pray for their family members, remembering especially children who have a parent in prison.

We pray for those who work in prisons: including those who work full time as custody officers and those who work with prisoners in the probation service, in education, in health care, in chaplaincy, etc.