

prisonersweek.org.uk

Prisoners Week 2021

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Prisoners Week 2020

Not Alone

PRISONERS WEEK

15TH – 21ST NOVEMBER 2020

Join us for our Online Launch Service on Sunday 15th November at 10am on our [Facebook](#) page

Not Alone

This year we have all learnt what it means to be locked down behind closed doors. As a result, much of the physical support available to people in prison was not available at the same time as prison doors were locked for more hours each day. Amid this, new ways were used to reach people to let them know that they are not alone. This year's theme is an assurance to those inside that there are people thinking about them, praying for them and supporting them wherever possible. There is also the challenge to each one of us on the outside – how can we 'be there' for people in prison? How can we support people on release and in the community? How can we show compassion to families affected by imprisonment? How can we show we care even when a physical presence is not possible? We believe that God's presence can break into the darkest of cells...but He uses us to demonstrate that loving presence to one another.

This year's Prisoners Week is an invitation to find out more about the support available to people inside and out of prison and to consider how you might get involved so that people in and out of prison know they are not alone. On the Support page there is a list of different organisations including many who work with chaplaincy teams in prisons across Scotland. During Prisoners Week there will be a [series of Forums](#) where different areas of support will be discussed. The whole week will be kicked off with a Virtual Launch Service at 10am on Sunday 15th November. This will be available on

the [Prisoners Week Scotland Facebook](#) Page. We hope you will follow the links and find out more about what is going on.

"Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them." Hebrews 13:3

The Prisoners Week Prayer

Lord, you offer freedom to all people.

We pray for those who are held in prison.

Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist.

Support with your love: prisoners, their families and friends,
prison staff, chaplains and all who care.

Heal those who have been wounded by the activities of others,
especially the victims of crime.

Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, to love mercy,
and walk humbly together with Christ

in his strength and in his Spirit,

now and every day. Amen.

On this website you'll find Prisoners Week information, a calendar of events, details of organisations that offer help and advice, discussion ideas, reflections, and worship resources which include prayers from the Christian and Islamic Faiths. In every prison Chaplains and those working with them offer spiritual care and the means by which people can explore and practise faith.

Prisoners Week is an initiative of the Churches that aims to stimulate discussion, highlight concerns and share hope.

"What the Lord requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God." Micah 6:8

Contact us

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Prisoners Week Trust

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NOT ALONE

Prisoners Week, 15-22 November 2020

Prisoners Week takes place in the third week of November and is an initiative of the Churches which aims to stimulate discussion, highlight concerns and share hope, in prisons and communities across Scotland.

National Launch Service

We will be doing things differently this year due to Covid-19. The traditional Monday evening Launch Service will be replaced by a virtual one to be broadcast on SUNDAY 15th NOVEMBER 2020 at 10am. This will be pre-recorded involving people from a range of prisons, churches and organisations. The Launch Service will be broadcast on the [Prisoners Week Scotland Facebook](#) page at the same time as it goes out across TV stations in prisons to allow people in and outside prison to watch it at the same time.

Website

The website www.prisonersweek.org.uk is being populated with resources to support this year's theme.

Planning

A Planning Group meets on a regular basis each year to determine the theme. This year the organisations involved include Sanctus Media, Prison Alpha, Families Outside, Cutting Edge Theatre, Prison Fellowship, in addition to a number of Prison Chaplains and a Prisoners Week Trustee. Prisoners Week Trust is a Scottish Charity (SC043431).

EVENTS PAGE

During and around Prisoners' Week, Chaplaincy Teams and their colleagues, are busy organising events in both prison and community, liaising with the media, preaching from pulpits, providing material for magazines, meeting community groups, visiting schools, hosting invited tours, and generally doing what can be done to highlight Prisoners Week! Prisoners' Week Events also engage with prisoners, on the basis that not only is it good to remember those in prison it is especially good, if you are in custody, to know that you are being remembered. Some prisons will have services to which the families of prisoners are invited, offering support also to the children and partners of those in custody. Activities in prison include creating a Prisoners' Week Garden, Quizzes, music events, and various meetings with invited speakers and guests from the community.

Prisoners' Week is but one week - those involved in prison ministry are happy to meet with community groups throughout the year. Below is a calendar indicating some of the activities that are organised. It will be added to as more details become available.

Events 'in the community' are open to the public. Events in prisons are by invitation only.

PRISONERS WEEK FORUMS - NOT ALONE

In what ways can we help people feel that they are not alone?

This year we will be hosting four forums on Zoom to explore the different kinds of support offered to people affected by the criminal justice system. Each forum will follow a similar format. After a brief introduction to the topic, panel members, each chosen for their experience and involvement in the relevant area, will be introduced. There is a representative of the Scottish Prison Service on all four panels. Each panel member will talk for around 5 minutes. During the talk meeting participants will be able to submit questions via zoom chat with the Chair of the Forum facilitating the answering of question and ensuing discussion. **Have a look at what we are planning for each forum below and register for the ones that interest you.**

Forum 1 — Pastoral Care in Prisons — Sunday 15th Nov @ 3pm

Prison Chaplains will be speaking about the support they provide and have continued to provide throughout Covid-19 lockdown in new and innovative ways. **Sue Brookes**, Interim Director of Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement for the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) will present her vision of pastoral care which considers the trauma and bereavement which people often experience before and during their incarceration. Questions and answers will follow after panel members have given a short talk. You may want to find out how you can become involved as a chaplaincy volunteer after hearing the speakers! The session will be chaired by **Rev Sheena Orr**, Church of Scotland Chaplaincy Advisor to the SPS.

[Click here](#) to register

Forum 2 — Support inside Prisons — Tuesday 17th Nov @ 3pm

Helping convicted people to unlock their potential to live a transformed life is the daily challenge of prison staff. The range of activities available, and their rational, is introduced by **Scott McLellan**, former Head of Offender Outcomes at HMP Low Moss, talking about his vision for what people do when out of their cell. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, **Wendy Sinclair-Gieben**, will give her vision of what a 21st Century prison should look and feel like. And a person recently released from prison will reflect on the support they received. Questions and answers will follow a short talk by each of the panel members. The session will be chaired by **Dan Gunn**, retired Prison Governor and active Board member of Stirling Interfaith Community Justice Group and Prisoners Week Trust (two of many hats!).

[Click here](#) to register

Forum 3 — Support outside Prisons — Wednesday 18th Nov @ 7pm

People in prison come from a community and go back into a community. The welcome and support they receive can make all the difference as to whether they reoffend or not. **Rob Strachan**, Divisional Head of Strategy, Planning and Partnership will talk about how the recent Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened the links that the Scottish Prison Service has with many external organisations to develop an integrated support process for those being released. **Paul Stevenson**, Director of Homelessness Prevention, Bethany Christian Trust, has wide experience of the range of barriers people face on release from prison and will bring his vision to the table. **Kevin Neary** uses his past and present lived experience to support others in developing more positive relationships in the community, making connections and building bridges to more positive destinations. The Forum will be chaired by **Pete White**, formerly of Positive Prison? Positive Futures but now busy developing a movement called 'Only Just'.

[Click here](#) to register

Forum 4 — Support for Families — Thursday 19th Nov @ 7pm

It is often said that families serve a sentence alongside their loved one in prison. Through no fault of their own partners, children and the wider family can find their world turned upside down in an instant. This Forum explores the issues faced by families, the support available and the vision for a compassionate community. Panel members include a family member of someone in prison, a Scottish Prison Service Family Contact Officer who helps parents and children to keep in touch during imprisonment, and a representative of Early Years Scotland who provide support to families with young children. The Forum will be chaired by **Families Outside** and will be of interest to anyone concerned about those who are left behind when someone goes to prison.

[Click here](#) to register

WORSHIP PAGE:

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR PRISONERS WEEK THEME FOR 2020 NOT ALONE

Thanks to the Rev Donald Scott for taking the lectionary readings and using them to reflect on the Prisoners Week theme of 'Not Alone' for the Church of Scotland Weekly Worship.

Resources for children can also be [found by on this PDF](#).

You can download a printable copy of the worship notes by [clicking here for \[PDF\]](#); or [here for \[WORD\]](#).

You can also download a PowerPoint slide featuring the Prisoners Week prayer by [clicking here \[PPT\]](#).

INTRODUCTION

November is a season of remembrance and this Sunday offers the opportunity to remember those in prison. During the lockdown prison staff, including some Chaplains, continued to serve the needs of what is often a highly vulnerable and volatile group of people, gathered together without social distancing from often the very communities on the margins of society where the virus took a firm grip. This Prisoners Week the theme "Not Alone" has been chosen to help congregations and others to think and imagine what it might be like to spend time in the facilities throughout the country where people are held. Our thinking and imagining might lead to questions about why prison is used as it is, and whether there might be other more successful ways of keeping society safe, and rehabilitating offenders.

Headlines would suggest that overcrowding in prisons might make the theme a little redundant! However, when cell doors shut and lock and prisoners are left with their own thoughts and no access to phones to gain support from family and loved ones. prison can feel a very lonely place indeed.

We are reminded of the verse, "Lo. I am with you." In the midst of isolation. doubt, self-loathing, anger and recrimination God is with each and every one of us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES OVERVIEW

Judges 4 vs1-7:

The book of Judges probably comes to us as a series of songs, poems and stories about the history of Israel and the "heroes of the faith", known as the judges, one of whom is Deborah the Prophetess. Lovers of Marvel comics may be surprised to see similarities here! Very little is known about Deborah, and here her role is to motivate Barak to attack a much stronger force against a "super-enemy", Sisera.

Barak wins the day against the odds.

The next two verses after the lectionary reading are interesting in revealing Deborah's role and the position of women in ancient Hebrew society!

There are echoes of Gideon giving up numerical superiority in battle to prove Jachweh's superiority and certainly the story lends itself to consideration of what can be achieved with God's help.

Psalms 123

The theme of turning to God for succour, support and mercy also runs through Psalm 123. The setting is probably post-exilic and it is a psalm of lament, put into the mouth of a pilgrim smarting under the insults and derision of foreign oppressors.

It is a psalm crying out for recognition and the return of justice to a land ruled by oppressors, "stuffed with contempt".

The petitioner compares his life to that of a slave, looking for some sign of favour from an all-powerful master. It is a powerful psalm which looks for justice, but sees none. There is a sense of resignation

and powerlessness, but also dependence on a God who will surely listen to his people as in Egypt. In the Christian tradition, we would echo, "Marantha! Come Lord, quickly come."

Zephaniah Ch1 vs7,12-18

Looking for justice is also a theme within the Zephaniah alternative lesson. Zephaniah appears to have been part of the royal court, and maybe even the royal family, whose criticism of society's ills are all the more powerful for that fact. "The day is soon coming" picks up on imagery from Isaiah 2 and Amos 5. God will come to judge his people, and those who are greedy, complacent and refuse to believe that God cares had better watch out!

The imagery of the message is of a terrible and wrathful judgement on the wicked, which will be swifter than a champion runner and will wreak unavoidable destruction and desolation. There will be no bribe or ransom, no second chance, no exception or exemption. The phrase Old Testament "pit dangling" comes to mind! However, although the lectionary leaves us dangling, neither Zephaniah nor the gospel leaves us without hope!

Psalm 90 vs1-8,12

In a similar vein to Zephaniah and psalm 123, Psalm 90 is another community lament, urging people to accept their fate. Beginning with praise for the One who created time and space, it ends with a plea for pity.

Wisdom lies in accepting our fate and recognising we can never live up to God's standards. The best we can hope to achieve is understanding our limitations before the One who is beyond time and space.

1 Thessalonians 4 vs 13-18

The nihilism of Psalm 90 is a good counterpoint to the teachings of Paul, encouraging the young church in Thessalonika. The lectionary passage could be described as the hallmark of the letter, which is hope in the resurrection of Jesus. The early church were puzzled about the status of people who died before Jesus returned. Had they forfeited their salvation? Some may also have believed that baptism into the death and resurrection gave them immunity from death-rendered them immortal as in the rites of the mystery religions.

The thrust and purpose of Paul's response is to make clear the inseparable relationship between the Christian and Christ. The passage then spends a considerable amount of time speculating on the eschaton, or The End. He then goes on to remind the readers that his intent is not to give a preview of the future, but a basis for faith and security when faced with death-not a blow by blow account of the end times, but a source of encouragement that we are all in God's hands.

Matthew 25 vs 14-30

The gospel lesson is an antidote for those who might have wished to sit around just waiting for Christ's return! The parable of the three servants makes it clear that God expects us to use what we have in service of the kingdom. The three servants might have different talents, but they are expected to use them fruitfully and not waste that which has been entrusted to them.

Matthew uses several parables in this passage about the need for watchfulness. They may well have originated at a time when the early church had begun to lose some keenness in waiting for the return of Jesus. Perhaps there was a laxness creeping in or even exploitation of power and authority within the fellowships. The parables serve as a warning to be prepared!

Sermon ideas

There are several themes which might suggest themselves from these passages.

Preparedness:

Prison is a time of waiting. One of the old saws oft quoted to prisoners struggling with a sentence is, "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime." Prisoners are encouraged to prepare for release, mentally, physically and spiritually. How do we prepare for life with Christ? Using the Matthew and/or Thessalonians passages a number of avenues might present themselves, reminding people that we are "Not Alone", but supported by fellowship in and with Christ.

Justice:

The longing for God to bring justice into situations where it is absent is a common theme in our OT lessons. This could lead to an exploration of our own relationship with justice and whether we seek and pursue it in our lives. Again, the apparent absence of justice in various situations could be held against our faith that we are "Not Alone." God will act and not leave us bereft.

Living with isolation:

Using the OT passages to examine issues of dislocation and exclusion. The lockdown in Spring forced many to confront issues of personal loneliness and ask questions about where we get our strength and support. The theme of "Not Alone" could be explored through sharing personal stories of God's presence in the midst of loss of community. This in turn could lead to an examination of how we use prison in society, and what that experience of being separate means for prisoners and their families.

Against all odds:

There are many stories of personal faith being found in prison in the most unlikely of people and circumstances. Some people may be willing to come and share their stories, or it may be that online resources can be found which tell their tales. Finding hope in Christ despite some very bleak situations can be a profound demonstration of God's power against the odds, and the fact that no matter what has happened we are "Not Alone" in Him.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

All songs are from Church Hymnary 4th Edition, Canterbury Press Norwich, unless otherwise stated.

54 Lord You have always been our home ([Listen](#))

Two settings of Psalm 90, reminding us of God's care and our frailty

118 Womb of life and source of being ([Listen](#))

A lovely Trinitarian hymn which uses imagery of God our home and the source of our being.

- 168 God weeps at love withheld** ([Listen](#))
A confessional hymn, yearning for justice which would complement the Zephaniah passage well
- 263 God of Freedom, God of Justice.** ([Listen](#))
Possibly the most suitable hymn in the hymn book for Prisoners' Week!
- 264 Judge Eternal, throned in splendour** ([Listen](#))
Complements the idea of yearning for justice in the Old Testament passages
- 479 View the present through the promise** ([Listen](#))
Fits well with the reading from Thessalonians 4
- 518 Lift up your hearts!** ([Listen](#))
Complements the parable of the three servants with its imagery of gifts given and blessed
- 566 When I receive the peace of Christ my loneliness will end** ([Listen](#))
Uses the theme of being alone and ending loneliness in Christ
- 736 Give thanks for life** ([Listen](#))
Picks up on the themes of resurrection in Christ in the Thessalonians passage
- 805 Your will be done on earth** ([Listen](#))
Can be used as a response during the intercessions

Hymn numbers given are from: The Church of Scotland Church Hymnary Fourth Edition, Canterbury Press, unless otherwise stated.

PRAYERS

Approach, confession and supplication

God of all time and space,
You were with your people of old.
You are with us now.
You have promised to be with us until the end of time.
We give you thanks that in your presence we are not alone.
Your love has held us from seed to personhood.
Your grace has infiltrated our lives, never letting us go
Your hope leads us on, encouraging us to find you in ever new and ever surprising ways.

We confess that sometimes we lose faith and trust.
We look at our lives and our world and don't like what we see.
We are impatient, ungrateful and angry.
There doesn't seem to be a clear plan.
Our ideas come unstuck and we question if there is any purpose to anything.

In this time of worship, remind us of your promise never to leave us or forsake us.
Help us to trust your promise that you will be with us.
Teach us again about the power and folly of your love.

We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Benediction

You are not alone.
Go into the world,
surrounded by God's love,
supported by God's people
and strengthen by the knowledge that God will be with us.

May the love of the Creator, the Saviour and the Spirit
Sustain you today and always. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord,
We give what we have.
We bring who we are.
Knowing that it can never be perfect and never enough.
Yet.

We bring our talents. The gifts you have given us
The people you have made us.
Knowing that you accept us and love us.

Use our lives and our living to build your people.
Use your people to build a better world
Use this world to show the beauty of life with you.

When we get complacent or downhearted teach us to count our blessings
When we count our blessings, teach us to pray for those who need your blessing.

Today we pray for those held in prison.
We pray for changed hearts for those who need to give up hate and hurt.
We pray for justice for those held for their opposition to wrongful abuse of power
We pray for new love where guilt and anger has soured relationships.

We pray for those who work in prison.
We give thanks for commitment to making things better
We give thanks for dedication to carrying out thankless and difficult jobs
We give thanks for skilful use of talents to rebuild shattered lives.

We pray for those who make decisions about how we use prison.
Bless those entrusted with decisions about justice and how it is enacted.

We pray for politicians, advisors, judges, and lawyers.

We ask a blessing on community and charity workers striving to improve lives on the margins.

We pray for the media that they might ask questions about how our communities do justice and not seek vengeance and incite hatred.

We pray for ourselves, that we might seek justice and pursue it.

A time to bring community concerns.

Now gathered together as the community of God's people, not alone, but united we say....

Our Father...

SUPPORT:

GIVE SUPPORT PAGE:

PRISONERS WEEK TRUST - SUPPORTING ITS WORK

The theme for Prisoners Week 2016 is 'Remember Me'. Each year a new theme is chosen and resources are developed. The Prisoners Week Trust (SC043431) was set up to support activities in Prisoners Week. Prisoners Week seeks to raise awareness by:

- Distributing publicity through Churches each year.
- Providing parish resources.
- Developing a website – www.prisonersweek.org.uk with information, a calendar of events, details of organisations that offer help and advice, reflections, worship resources and discussion ideas.
- Supporting many events in partnership with prison Chaplains and others, in communities and in prisons.
- Organising national events - an ecumenical launch Service and, usually, a panel discussion.
- Producing multi-media resources.
- Engaging with various media representatives.

A Planning Group meets on a regular basis each year to determine the theme and includes representatives from third sector organisations as well as the Churches and prison Chaplains.

Prisoners Week Trust is a new charity, registered in Scotland No: SC043431, which was formed to promote and enable Prisoners Week to develop. We invite you, your Church or organisation to consider supporting this work. One way of supporting Prisoners Week Trust is through our [online donation page](#). Thank you for your interest.

SUPPORT SERVICES PAGE:

LEARN MORE ABOUT SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN,
AND THOSE AFFECTED BY, PRISON.

Prison Chaplaincy

Every prison is served by a Chaplaincy Team. Chaplains are available to offer pastoral and religious care to prisoners, their families and prison staff. Chaplains work with a range of churches and other external organisations through which volunteering opportunities are available.

If you would like to discuss volunteering please contact Sheena Orr, Scottish Prison Service Chaplaincy Adviser in the first instance who will refer your request to the appropriate Prison Chaplaincy or organisation.

Tel 0131 330 3575 or email sheena.orr@sps.pnn.gov.uk

The Scottish Prisoner's Families Support & Information Helpline

Operated by Families Outside: www.familiesoutside.org.uk

Telephone: 0500 83 93 83 (Freephone)

Answerphone if not available or [email us](#).

Prison Fellowship Scotland

Working with prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. Telephone: 0141 552 1288.

www.prisonfellowshipscotland.com

Victim Support Scotland

Providing support to victims and witnesses of crime.

Helpline Telephone: 0845 603 9213

www.victimsupportscotland.org.uk

International Commission for Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICCPCC)

www.iccpcc.org

Integrate

Integrate is a Community Chaplaincy providing a bridge between prison and community. It is based in Aberdeen and the Senior Community Chaplain is Caroline Crombie.

Tel: 01224 646424

www.integratescotland.org

Breathing Space



Sometimes our thoughts and feelings can overwhelm us. It helps to get some Breathing Space. Pick up the phone - we're here to listen. Need help now? Call free on 0800 83 85 87

Connect To Community

Connect to Community (formerly CFEO Scotland) – Building Positive Pathways after Prison. Covering the whole of Scotland, Connect to Community seeks to enable those leaving prison to reintegrate into their communities with the help of local mentors and churches. Tel: 0141 766

0167 www.bethanychristiantrust.com

Junction 42

A local charity that's passionate about delivering key services to see the lives of offenders and their communities visibly transformed by the hope of the gospel. Junction 42 has two Connect groups supporting ex-prisoners in Glasgow and Edinburgh. During Covid-19 lockdown J42 has been supplying prisons across UK with Faith Packs containing a CD with Christian music, Bible readings and something 'crafty' to colour in or make. www.junction42.org Contact: david.swan@junction42.org

Quiet Waters

Quiet Waters provide bereavement counselling at Cornton Vale Women's prison. www.quiet-waters.org/counselling-service/bereavement-support

Christianity Explored Prison Edition



For those who may have an interest, Christianity Explored has adapted its material for use in the prison setting. Details are found at the following link: www.ceministries.org/