

“PRISONS SUNDAY”

also “One World Week”

Sunday 18th October 2020 10:30 am

Rev'ds Henry le Ruez, Nico Hilmy-Jones & Dawn Saunders

*This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church.
If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God,
knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.*

Call to Worship & Candle lit

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!

Hymn: STF 083

Praise my soul the King of heaven



Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven -
who like thee his praise should sing?

*Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!*

Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.

*Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness!*

Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.

*Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows.*

Angels in the height, adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,-
dwellers all in time and space.

*Praise him! Praise him! Praise
with us the God of grace!*

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

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.

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.

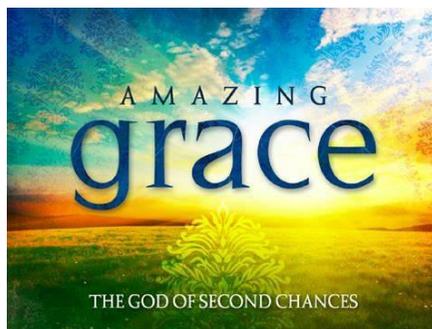
PRAYING WITH THE VICTIMS OF CRIME – Comforter Spirit, ease the distress and suffering of those whose lives are locked down because of crimes committed against them. Move through others to bring reassurance that they are not alone, physically or in the depths of their souls. Unlock doors that reveal a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

READING: Matthew 21:31-46

Read by Ellie Saunders

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ me.’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was

hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'



HYMN: STF 440 Amazing Grace

Amazing grace-how sweet the sound-
that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to
fear,- his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and
snares- I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus
far,- and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand
years - bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise-
than when we first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807)

Rev'd Henry le Ruez,

*member of the Prison Chaplaincy Team,
Jersey. Extracts from this week's Radio
Jersey Broadcasts.*

Coronavirus, the dreaded word.
We'll be glad to see the back of it. As
everywhere else, things began to
change last March. It was no
exception in the Prison. The regimes
began to change as the restrictions
kicked in. No more visits, seeing
loved ones and especially those
special moments with the children
came to an end. Instead there were
free video calls, they are called
purple visits, a lifetime for families to
see each other and for loved ones to
see for each other that they partner,
their son, their daughter in custody
was doing Ok. It was at that point
that the local prisoners understood
for those prisoners from away go
through. There were less activities as
numbers were restricted to allow for
more segregation to take place so
more time in the cell behind the
door. And as some staff were taken
ill and had to isolate in case they had
the virus many extra work hours
were put in and activities had to be
curtailed and nobody likes change.
Especially when the little freedom is
even more restricted.

One staff member put it like this, "Work became a cauldron of stress, anxiety and worry". Another staff member said "I did worry about my elderly parents and the effect it had on them. And not knowing whether I would see them again". This was a view shared by many prisoners whose families did not live over here in Jersey. Then there were the few of us who were asked to work from home. One man said this "I felt like a skiver, even though I was vulnerable as regards Covid-19 your self-esteem gets low and you get lazy. The Governor wrote to the staff back in March the next few weeks will be unprecedented in our lifetime. We will get through it with our collective effort and strength and so we have. Not least because everyone worked together and if this winter brings more restrictions we are at least not looking at the unknown anymore. Together is a marvellous word. The great missionary, Paul, writes to the church in Ephesus "Be kind, compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Together is not just a word, it's an experience.



We are in Prisons Week when we have the opportunity to remember those who work in the criminal justice system and in particular in our prison. The theme for this year is perhaps predictable – united in

lockdown. The Covid-19 threat was taken as seriously in the Island, not least because the prison is a closed community and the only way the virus could come in was through the staff and in new receptions.

I remember attending a staff briefing in mid-March led by our Governor and head of health care. The facts were clearly spelt out and we became aware that a huge amount of work was taking place in order to ensure everybody's welfare. Everything was to change from then on as in person visits were curtailed and prisoners were instead allowed video calls with loved ones, provided by the prison at no charge. There were no more professional visits and court appearances were replaced as much as possible by video link.

Activities were reduced and enhanced segregation took place within the prison's regime. Some staff members no longer went home but were put up in hotels and staff considered vulnerable because of health or age were asked to work from home. I will investigate some of the emotions.

As a bit of a unique community in the Island we had to cross some uncharted territory. It was a moment, as indeed it was globally, when we were not in control. That's not a good place, in some ways. In another, it is because that it where we can in realise a little more when

we cannot rely just on ourselves. We need to think bigger, out of the box so to speak because our world's maker is perhaps more secure and real than we think. The Psalmist in the Bible says this "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. I don't think we need a coronavirus to see that that is true.



Another side of lockdown – the peace and tranquillity. I thoroughly enjoyed the peace and calmer pace of life with less traffic and no planes writes another staff member. Kindness and generosity demonstrated by complete strangers and neglected friendships restored. There were some benefits certainly on the outside. In the prison people adapted and, for the most part, coped well with what was happening as you get used to new regimes and accept this is how it is going to be for however long. For now things have been relaxed a little with one in-person visitor allowed per week and some professional visits taking place.

Yet it is not over and the winter is on its way. We were warned that the virus could return with a vengeance and we had to be prepared. Certainly there is more experience and perhaps the fear of the unknown has been replaced with a measure of hope that there will be a vaccine on the horizon and we will know better

how to cope. But we are not sure and we have no timeframe. In the prison the worship services continue, albeit with all the restrictions you might expect and many, many conversations as we turn to the one who comes to us if we let him. He does not come with answers to the many questions we hold but with a peace which passes understanding. It is in the shadow of the cross that Jesus says this, peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives, do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid. I think that even in lockdown we can find a place where we know the peace of God.



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.

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.



HYMN: STF 256 When I needed a neighbour were you there?

When I needed a neighbour
were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour
were you there?

*And the creed and the colour
and the name won't matter,
Were you there?*

I was hungry and thirsty,
were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty,
were you there?

Chorus

I was cold, I was naked,
were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked,
were you there?

Chorus

When I needed a shelter
were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter
were you there?

Chorus

When I needed a healer
were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer
were you there?

Chorus

Wherever you travel
I'll be there, I'll be there,
Wherever you travel
I'll be there.

*And the creed and the colour and
the name won't matter,
I'll be there.*

*Sydney Carter (1915-2004)
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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.

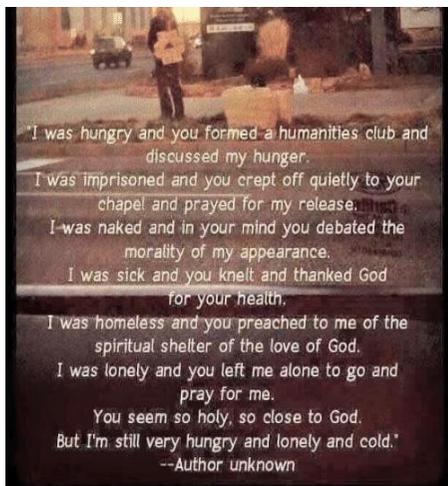


PRAYING WITH THOSE WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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.

REFLECTION

AND A PRAYERFUL POEM:



I was hungry and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.

I was imprisoned and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release.

I was naked and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I was lonely and you left me alone to go and pray for me.

You seem so holy, so close to God. But I am still very hungry and lonely and cold.

Author unknown yet very wise,

HYMN: STF 503

Love divine, all loves excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down:
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

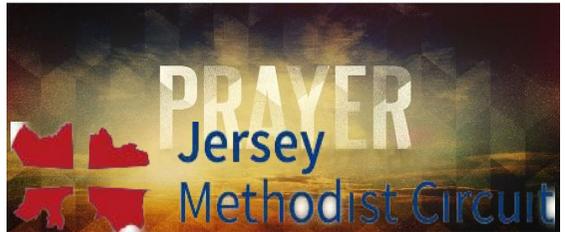
Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless may we be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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Sending Prayer:

Dear God, I am sorry for taking my freedom for granted. Lord, bad influence from friends and family has made some people end up in prison. They are scared and fearful. Lord, remove fear from their hearts and fill it with your peace that surpasses all understanding. May they come to know you the creator of heaven and earth that they may not become hardened by prison life but may start worshiping you in spirit and truth. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.



Benediction

God sends us into the world, to accept the cost and to discover the joy of discipleship. Go-carrying the peace of Christ, the love of God and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, knowing God is with you, now and always. You are not alone. Amen

