

**HOLD
FAST
TO**



PRISONS WEEK
15th - 21st November 2009

**A week of prayer for all
those involved with prisons**
www.prisonswalk.org

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HOLD FAST TO HOPE

We live in a troubled world where it is easy for some to lose hope, and that can be particularly true for those affected by the reality of crime. The challenge of Prisons Week 2009 is to "hold fast to hope" – a hope that is not just a fanciful optimism but one that is rooted in the Christian hope that the divine spark is in all people, that no-one is beyond redemption and that change does and can take place. Please join us in prayer this Prisons Week for the many people affected by the reality of crime and imprisonment, as we explore what hope can be for all those affected and how people and relationships can be restored.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. Hebrews 10. 23-25

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 activities 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.

Day 1 Hope for victims

It is an incredibly hard challenge for many to respond to being a victim. It is natural to have feelings of anger and a need for retribution. If those feelings continue to dominate this can make being a victim even worse; in the extreme, it can consume the whole of life. As difficult as it is, these feelings can change and hope can enable people to move forward and deal with the pain in a way that restores life.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Luke 11.4

Lord Jesus Christ, you were the innocent victim of evil men: falsely accused and betrayed by your friends, held captive, assaulted and sentenced to death. But your love conquered death and brings hope to the world. Be close

to those who are victims of crime, that they may find healing and peace and grace to forgive, and with you by their side find hope for the future. Amen.

Day 2 Hope for prisoners

Unless you have been a prisoner it is difficult to really understand how it feels to be imprisoned; to have your failings publicly portrayed and also to have to cope with the reality of being away from your friends and family for months or years. People who are imprisoned cope in different ways. Some pretend that it does not matter; others struggle to cope, and some resort to self-harming. Others, however, find hope in helping fellow prisoners to find a way forward with "love and good deeds" and by encouraging one another. We pray that all those in prison may be given wisdom and strength to find a positive way forward, and to lead useful and restored lives.

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. Revelation 3.20

Almighty God, who sets the prisoners free and who gives hope to the hopeless, have mercy upon all who are in prison. Lord, support those who are in for the very first time as they pass through this very difficult period of their lives: being separated from their families, partners and friends. Have compassion upon them and help them. Heal the brokenhearted. Proclaim liberty to the captives. Give them courage and strength to face the challenge to change where necessary and give them faith to endure, new hope, new life, patience to bear and helpfulness to hold fast: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 3 Hope for families

One of the heartening sights in prison is the faithfulness of many families and friends who regularly visit those in prison, even though they may have travelled long distances. It is difficult for families of prisoners to serve "the silent sentence" when they may not have been involved in the offences that led to imprisonment. The success of all the initiatives created to maintain and restore contacts with children, family and friends is a major factor in the resettlement of prisoners.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11.28

Lord, we ask your blessing on prisoners' families. Give them strength to cope with separation; fill them with hope and confidence to face the future; and keep them and their loved ones always in your care. Amen.

Day 4 Hope for those who work in prisons

It is easy to underestimate the challenges faced by those who work in prison when day after day they have to respond to the needs of those held in custody, especially those who are very distressed or disturbed. It is so easy to distance oneself from the reality of other human lives and just "do the job". We give thanks for all the professionalism shown and pray that those who work in our prisons may be given the wisdom and strength to maintain hope, treat all with dignity and humanity, and never give up on anyone.

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. Matthew 25.40

Almighty God, your son Jesus Christ has set us free from the bonds of sin and daily calls us out of darkness to live in your light. We hold before you our prisons and all who work in them. Grant to all prison governors, officers, staff, agencies and volunteers a new experience of your justice, mercy and hope. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 5 Hope for the community

This need for hope in the community is a challenge in two ways. First, there is a need to challenge the attitudes that only seek to inflict retribution, for that can become a vicious circle. Second, the vast majority of those sent to prison will return to their communities, and so we need to maintain hope in the support offered to those people who are released from prison. In this way there is a real chance for them to be restored to a positive and creative place in their communities.

What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6.8

Dear Lord, we pray for those who work in the community. May their work, support and dedication be a beacon of hope and love to those who are in prison. Amen.

Day 6 Hope for the justice system

It is very easy for those engaged in the justice system to waver from any sense of hope, especially in our courts, where day after day they are so aware of the failings of humanity. The challenge to keep hope alive is considerable and we pray for them in their deliberations and judgements. We pray that they might demonstrate hope and creativity in administering a justice that restores.

You shall not render an unjust judgement, you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. Leviticus 19.14-16

Lord, we pray for those who administer justice. In their deliberations, decisions and delivery of justice may they be inspired to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk in hope with you, Lord. Amen.



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Prisons Week was formed to pray for and raise awareness of the needs of prisoners and their families, victims of offenders, prison staff and all those who care. It consists of representatives of Christian denominations and Christian organisations.

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 assist in any of the above. For suggestions as to how you can help, to make a donation or to order larger quantities of these prayer leaflets/posters, please visit our website at www.prisonsw.org where you will also find additional materials including prayers, worship resources, ideas, useful contacts, books and more. You may also write to:

The Secretary, Prisons Week PO Box 2733 Lichfield WS13 6GZ

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