

Prisons Week 2026: All are Invited

These resources are designed to help you to plan a service to mark Prisons Week 2026. They include Bible readings, an introduction to this year's theme, music/hymn suggestions, prayers and preaching notes. These have been created and written as a resource initially for Prisons Week, with Mothers' Union additions in [blue](#).

Revised Common Lectionary Readings

- Isaiah 25. 1-9
- Psalm 23
- Philippians 4. 1-9
- Matthew 22. 1-14

Introduction to Prisons Week

The message at the heart of this parable of Jesus and of Prisons Week 2026 is beautifully captured by N.T. Wright: 'Jesus' love reaches us wherever we are but refuses to leave us as we are.' God's desire is that all would respond to his invitation, both good and bad. Both good and bad require God's clothes of righteousness. None is worthy. God seeks us out despite our behaviour and calls us to be changed; to take off the old and to put on the new.

And so, we invite you to respond to God's invitation, maybe for the first time, maybe with renewed insight. Join us in prayer this Prisons Week, praying for people across the criminal justice system: victims of crime, offenders and individuals in custody, the families of all affected, everyone working in probation, prisons, police and courts, for chaplains and anyone administering care and justice communities, [and Mothers' Union members volunteering with and in their local prisons. During this Prisons Week, we invite you to find out more about our prisons programme work in your diocese, and to join us and join in.](#)

The Prisons Week Prayer

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for everyone 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 anyone who has 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 his Spirit, now and every day. **Amen.**

[We encourage MU members to use the Prisons Week prayer during midday prayers, which will also be used during our daily Facebook midday prayers.](#)

Hymns and Worship Songs

Hymns	Worship Songs
• All Are Welcome (Marty Haugen, 1994) • Praise to the Lord, the Almighty • Just As I Am, Without One Plea • Amazing Grace • There is a Redeemer • Brother, Sister, Let me Serve you • And can it be • Christ is made the sure foundation • Forth in the peace of Christ, we go	• Come As You Are (Crowder) • Who You Say I Am (Hillsong Worship) • Come People of the Risen King (Getty & Townend) • This Is Amazing Grace (Phil Wickham) • House of the Lord (Phil Wickham) • The Goodness of God (Bethel Music / Jenn Johnson) • Build Your Kingdom Here (Rend Collective) • O Come to the Altar (Elevation Worship) • Living Hope (Phil Wickham) • Way Maker (Leeland) • Bless the Lord, O My Soul (10000 Reasons) (Matt Redman)

Intercessions (Bidding Prayers)

A full set of intercessions that may be used at a Prison Week Service

In today's Gospel, we hear of a King who prepares a banquet and invites all to come. Confident in God's generous love and mercy, let us bring before him the needs of the Church and of the world.

We pray for the Church [and for Mothers' Union members](#) throughout the world. May we faithfully proclaim the good news that all are invited into God's kingdom. Give us grace to welcome people who feel forgotten, excluded or ashamed, and help us to reflect Christ's compassion in all that we do.

[An appropriate response should be used after each bidding]

We pray for all who are in prison. For people who are afraid, lonely or despairing; for anyone who carries deep regret; for everyone seeking a new beginning; and for all who have found faith while in custody. May they know that they are not beyond God's love and that Christ walks beside them even in the darkest places. [We give thanks for the work of Mothers' Union members serving as Your hands and feet bringing light and love to all in prison or on remand. We pray for all our fundraisers that have supported this important work. Bless our pilot project to enable the Word of God to be available within more prisons.](#)

We pray for victims of crime and for all whose lives have been marked by violence, abuse or loss. Bring healing where there is pain, peace where there is fear, and hope where there is despair. Help us always to seek justice with compassion and truth with mercy. [We pray for our Mothers' Union members working within their communities as peacebuilders, supporting and serving in love.](#)

We pray for prison leaders, chaplains, prison officers, governors, probation staff, healthcare workers, volunteers, partners and all who serve within the criminal justice system. Grant them wisdom, patience, integrity and compassion in their daily work, and sustain them in the demanding responsibilities they carry. [We give thanks to our Mothers' Union members as they work closely with people in authority within the criminal justice system to support families to stay connected.](#)

We pray for families affected by imprisonment. We remember spouses, partners, parents, grandparents and especially children who live with separation, face stigma, uncertainty and loss. [We give thanks for our Mothers' Union members, who faithfully support family life through their diverse volunteering. We bless them for their work in crèches and help with family days, and for providing books, creative materials, and language resources. We thank you for their comforting presence in prison visitors' centres and cafés, where they serve refreshments, care for children so parents and caregivers can focus on their visits and offer a listening ear to all who need it.](#)

Strengthen them with your love, surround them with supportive communities, and give them hope for the future.

We pray for everyone leaving prison and beginning again. Open doors of opportunity, provide suitable accommodation, meaningful work, supportive friendships and welcoming churches. [We give thanks for the release bags, vouchers and other resources that our Mothers' Union members can create and fill with useful items to help each person as they step outside the prison walls.](#) We give thanks and offer our prayers for all organisations working on the resettlement of people leaving prison. Help us to see each person not through the lens of their past but through the hope of the new life that Christ offers.

We pray for ourselves. Where we have judged others harshly, forgive us. Where we have ignored your invitation, draw us back. Clothe us with the new life of Christ, that we may live as people transformed by your grace and become faithful witnesses to your kingdom.

Merciful Father,
Accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

These prayers may be included in the intercessions at any service in Prisons Week.

God of mercy, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for the people in prison at HMP/YOI [insert name of local prison] and for their children and families. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. May your love overcome struggle and heartache and bring new life. [We give thanks that through our work \[name the diocesan initiatives\] we can support and share Your love for all people.](#)

Lord God, we commend to you all who work or volunteer, in courts, prisons and communities, [including our Mothers' Union members locally, nationally and globally.](#) May they know your presence with them as they continue to work tirelessly. Strengthen them, renew their energy, and may their efforts inspire us to share your love ever more widely.

Adapted from resources produced by PACT in 2025

Preaching Notes: Matthew 22:1–14

1. Introduction

Prison Sunday reminds us that:

- No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.
- Every person is made in the image of God
- The Church is called to remember people in prison (cf. Hebrews 13:3).
- Jesus himself experienced arrest, trial, and imprisonment before his crucifixion.

This parable speaks powerfully to us on Prison Sunday because it is about unexpected invitations, second chances, and transformed identity. The words of Jesus were spoken to the religious leaders of the day and challenged them to return to God's true invitation of welcome to everyone on the margins, and they challenge us today to offer a true welcome to anyone who comes through our doors. [This year we are celebrating 150 years of Mothers' Union, working with people of all faiths and none, transforming lives, strengthening families and communities, and advocating for meaningful change. The words of Jesus also challenge us as Mothers' Union members, as we put our faith into action, to provide support and love, free of judgement.](#)

If you have the ability, this would be an appropriate place to include this year's Prison Week video.

2. The King's Invitation (vv.1–7)

The king prepares a wedding banquet for his son. Throughout Scripture, God's kingdom is often pictured as a joyful feast.

Notice the generosity. Everything has already been prepared.

The invitation is not: "Come and earn your place."

It is: "Come. Everything is ready."

Many people - inside prison and outside - live believing they are unwanted or undeserving.

The Gospel begins with a different message – you are invited, God's mercy and grace come before our achievements.

3. The Rejected Invitation (vv.3–6)

Many people discover faith only when everything else has been stripped away. Prison can become a place where distractions disappear and sometimes “freedom” leaves no room for God and so prison often creates space to hear God's voice.

The greatest tragedy is not ignorance but indifference. The people who were invited are too preoccupied with business, possessions, ordinary life – they refuse the invitation.

4. The Unexpected Guests (vv.8–10)

But the king sends servants into the streets and the invitation changes, everyone is invited ‘both bad and good’.

It’s a powerful reminder that the Gospel is not first for respectable people. The kingdom gathers failures, outsiders, forgotten people and broken people, together with people who society might consider ‘respectable’ and ‘having their life together’. But everyone stands on equal ground before grace.

Many prisoners and prison leavers carry labels:

- offender
- addict
- violent
- thief
- failure

Society often defines people by the worst thing they’ve ever done but God doesn’t – God begins with an invitation.

5. The Wedding Garment (vv.11–13)

This is often the difficult part of the passage - the guest accepts the invitation but refuses the wedding garment.

Many scholars understand the garment to represent the transformed life God provides. It is not self-made righteousness; it is God's gift received with humility.

Grace welcomes us as we are, but it also refuses to leave us unchanged. Forgiveness and transformation always belong together. The wedding garment can also represent hypocrisy and unpreparedness; to not just have the outward appearance of faith but to take on the obedience and reverence of God's word and act on it, it is genuine commitment that is required and this demands we welcome others as Jesus did.

6. Conclusion

No prison wall can stop God's grace.

- Paul wrote letters from prison.
- Peter experienced prison.
- Joseph knew prison.
- Jesus knew arrest and captivity.

God has always worked in prisons, extending the invitation to a transformed life of grace and mercy.

Every person remains someone for whom Christ died and no conviction removes God's image; no sentence can cancel God's love.

The Church's calling is not simply to condemn wrongdoing but to proclaim redemption. The Gospel is more than forgiveness – it is about new creation. No one is beyond redemption and God delights in restoring broken lives.

Whether we are behind prison walls or trapped by guilt, addiction, shame, fear, or regret, the King still says: "Come. Everything is ready."

The invitation is free. The welcome is genuine. The transformation is real.

The challenge is simple: Will we come?

And having come, will we receive the new life that Christ freely gives?

7. Call to Respond

- Pray this Prisons Week (take a leaflet to help you in this) or visit www.prisonsworld.org
- Find out more about this ministry if you feel God is calling you to explore this further (you can find out about opportunities through sponsoring organisations noted on the leaflet)
- Find out more about the Mothers' Union Prison programme and the many activities undertaken by members in your Diocese as well as across Britain and Ireland and globally if you feel God is calling you to demonstrate your faith in action in this area. For general information about our work, visit <https://www.mothersunion.org>.