

Prayers for Criminal Justice Sabbath

Whether on your own or with your faith group, use this day to pray for those impacted by the criminal justice system.

A Prayer at the Prison Fence

God of Justice and Mercy;
Inside this prison are some of your children.
Some live here. Some work here.
Some are here to visit. Some are here to volunteer.
Some are saved here. Some die here.

We lift up every soul who passes through this space.
May we who leave through these gates
Remember those members of our community who cannot leave,
and act on our responsibilities to them.
May we who live here remember
that we have people who love us.
May we all remember
that walls do not divide community.
Relationship can transcend all distances.
Spirits can commune in love across fences.

Love connects us and holds us accountable
to be the best human beings we can be,
wherever we may be, inside or outside,

Love connects us and calls us to work for justice,
an end to violence, transforming systems of oppression,
whoever we may be, starting with ourselves and our daily walk.

Love connects us and fills us with innate value
that no one can take away, because the Source of that love
is the Creator, and we are God's beloved children.

In the world you made,
every space is blessed, every breath is sacred.
Even when we humans draw lines and build walls,
trying to make some spaces profane or beyond society's concern,
even here, Your Loving Spirit flows through and connects us.

We are sisters and brothers.
We are one human family.
We all have a role to play to make the world more peaceful,
more just, more compassionate,
more humane, more divine.
Empowered by the Holy Spirit of life and love,
let us start today.

A Prayer of Confession for Restored Justice

Holy One;

You gave us the law of love -
a new law to make the whole world renewed.

We are called to imitate you in mercy, not judgment.
We are called to live as examples, not enforcers.
We are called to trust there is enough, and to share.

Restoring justice takes hard work
from the whole community.
And so often, we fail
to live up to the dreams you have for us.
We confess that too often we resort to judgment,
instead of looking at our own errors.
We confess that too often we content ourselves
with our privilege,
instead of seeking out acts of solidarity.
We confess that too often we scapegoat others,
instead of looking at the complexity,
and our own complicity
in systems of oppression and violence.
We confess that too often we justify our own actions,
by putting others down.

We know that you have seen our errors
and have equipped us to make amends.
Help us face ourselves and our human frailty
with humility and not fear.
Help us become healers, though wounded,
and restorers of justice where it has been breached.

A Prayer with our Sisters and Brothers

Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer;
We are one human family, though separated at times.
The men and women inside prisons and jails and detention centers
are our brothers and sisters.
We are connected in ways both seen and unseen,
ways that are life-giving and ways that threaten us all.
No one is free when any one of us is oppressed,
or caged, or violated, or forgotten.
Today, we remember these connections
and our mutual responsibilities to one another.

On this Criminal Justice Sabbath,
we remember every person whose life has been touched
by crime, violence, and mass incarceration.
We affirm that they are beloved members of our community.

We lift up people who have survived crime

or lost their lives to it,
that they might know their stories are heard and matter.

We lift up people living in prisons and jails,
that they might know they are still part of our community
and that they are never walled off from you.

We lift up people who work and volunteer in prisons and jails,
that they might remember the wider community they represent
and its pro-social values of compassion and collaboration.

We lift up people working with survivors of crime,
that they might find balm to heal broken hearts.

We lift up foster families and case managers and social workers,
that they might provide a safety net where families cannot.

We lift up people working in the court systems and law enforcement,
that they might be renewed and recommitted to their work as public service
and its opportunities to offer healing in places of hurt.

We lift up activists, advocates, and elected leaders
working to transform broken systems
and make real our dreams of a better future.

We lift up people migrating across borders,
leaving traumas and hardship in their homelands
only to find themselves thrust into an inhospitable legal system.

We lift up medical staff, recovery supports, and mental healthcare providers,
healing the harms of trauma in mind, body, and soul.

We lift up restorative justice practitioners,
guiding conflicts to deeper healing in collaborative resolution.

We lift up communities
weakened by the absence of too many moms and dads.

We lift up every child whose parent is incarcerated,
that they might know they are loved and valuable beyond measure.

We pray that until crime and violence and oppression
no longer touch so many lives,
that we will continue to remember these people.
We will continue to listen to the hard stories.
We will continue to work for healing.
We will continue to help restore justice.

Empowered by Your Spirit, we commit ourselves to this work.