

2012

Worship Resource Guide
Forever family 25th Anniversary Edition



Connecting the faith community with children and families affected by parental incarceration

Foreverfamily, Inc.

www.foreverfam.org



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This Worship Resource was made possible through the support and dedicated efforts of the following individuals and organizations:

Rev. Dr. Dean Trulear
Minister Cornelius Lloyd
Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasters (AIB)
Foreverfamily National
Foreverfamily Atlanta
Foreverfamily Louisville
Families with whom Foreverfamily is proud to co-labor
Healing Communities USA.*

* Healing Communities, one of Foreverfamily's national partners, offers a framework for faith communities that seeks to engage congregations in the restoration and healing of people in their own congregations affected by crime, incarceration and reintegration after prison or jail. If your church is interested in learning more about how you might minister to prisoners and their families, please contact Healing Communities (www.healingcommunitiesusa.org) and/or read Ministry with Prisoners & Families: The Way Forward.

In the book, nationally recognized experts W. Wilson Goode, Charles E. Lewis, and Harold Dean Trulear are joined by an impressive list of contributors to address the critical issues of incarceration and prisoner reentry and their impact, especially on the African American community. The book's publisher, Judson Press, is donating \$1 from the sale of each copy of the book to fund the distribution of Christian resources to those in prison or in need. Ministry with Prisoners & Families can be ordered from Judson Press by calling 800-458-3766 or visiting www.judsonpress.com.





Created in 1987, Foreverfamily is the nation's first organization solely dedicated to serving some of the most marginalized children in our society- those with an incarcerated parent or parents- and supporting them as they, their parents, caregivers and extended families work to remain a family.

Over our 25-year history, we have helped more than 15,000 children of the incarcerated and their families. We have always been and will always be dedicated to helping families stay together and stay strong, even through the most difficult of situations.

Our organization is about family. It is about helping families stay in communication and stay together. It is about helping families survive and thrive in the harshest of times. But it is also about forming new bonds and new families. An important family is the family of God. It is in His family that we find unconditional love and acceptance, support and strength for the journey.

This Worship Resource was designed to provide congregations, lay leaders and ministers with tools to use during corporate worship so that as a family they can speak directly through to God, who is the only one who can keep us from falling.



Table of Contents

Overview and Introduction.....	4
Prayer Resources	7
Prayers of Invocation	7
Prayers of Intercession	7
Prayers for Prisons and Correctional Institutions	10
Prayers of Dismissal/Benedictions.....	11
Music Resources.....	12
Hymns (listed with author of text).....	12
Prison, Incarceration and God's Care.....	12
The Churches' Outreach to the Prisons.....	12
Anthems and Other Songs.....	13
Sermons, Sermon Topics, and Scripture Readings	13
Lectionary Readings	14
Scripture References and Readings	16
Litanies and Responsive Readings.....	18
A Prison Litany.....	19
An Anti-Incarceration Litany.....	22
Web Resources.....	23



Overview and Introduction

Over 1.6 million Americans reside in today's state and federal prisons. Another seven to 9 million pass through city and county jails annually. While the financial cost to local, state and federal government is well documented, another cost often goes unnoticed- the price paid by families left behind, especially children whose parents are incarcerated

Virtually every house of worship contains members who struggle, often in silence, with the burden of separation from loved ones behind bars. Mothers and fathers who once had high hopes for sons and daughters carry the burden share the stigma of having a child incarcerated for behavior not envisioned at a baby dedication or baptism. Grandparents lament their separation from the subjects of their spoiling.

Perhaps most tragic, children endure the pain of separation from parents- fathers no longer a part of their regular lives, and mothers only able to dote upon their children during selected visiting hours under the watchful eye of corrections officers. In a forum at a Baptist church in Hackensack, New Jersey, one advocate for female inmates observed that there are "no tears like those of a mother when the visiting hours are over, she and her sister inmates line up on one side of the room while the children line up across that room, and Mommy goes back to her cell and cries." Estimates offer that there are high schools in America where the student body numbers children of the incarcerated at up to 50 percent of the enrollment.

Our faith traditions speak of a God Who brings comfort to the afflicted. These broken families have God's heart, and this fact is our main focus in providing the worship resources contained here for those congregations who celebrate the mission of God amongst those families burdened by incarceration, silenced by stigma, weighted by shame, and pained by separation. They struggle, as many of us do, with forgiveness, both in their ability to offer forgiveness to their incarcerated loved one, and often with their own sense of guilt that they may have been complicit in their behavior. And the struggle to forgive extends to those of us directly victimized by the crimes of the incarcerated, tapping into our culture of revenge- a revenge often masked by the euphemism of "seeking justice."

As we receive God's forgiveness, we learn to forgive; we worship the God of Forgiveness. As we receive God's grace and mercy, we are empowered to offer grace and mercy to others. As we receive God's comfort in the midst of brokenness and alienation, we become willing to embrace those pained and broken, separated and stigmatized, by the realities of crime and incarceration. For many in our pews, this is a time of pain, an hour of burden. But in the words of the hymn writer: "God of Grace and God of Glory, grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour."



We have collected and composed a number of resources designed to assist your congregation in planning and executing a worship service, or series of services which recognizes God's care and the congregation's responsibility in supporting the families and children of prisoners. Whether or not we have intentionally identified such children and families, they are present every week in our corporate worship. Using these resources can help them know that they are not forgotten. Using these resources can also remind the congregation of their presence in their midst. To that end, this resource guide contains:

1. Special Prayers

We have both collected and composed prayers to be used in corporate worship on a day to support and surround the children and families of the incarcerated. Some of the prayers focus on God's care for the incarcerated themselves, while others point to the needs and conditions of the children and families left behind. They represent standard denominational offerings, historic documents, and newly composed efforts that affirm the presence and love of God in the midst of situations brought about by incarceration, and remind the congregation of how incarceration impacts us as "family."

2. Music Resources

We have compiled a list of hymns and other songs of faith that can be used for congregational singing, or choral selections. We have divided them categorically based on special themes surrounding incarceration and its impact on children and families. In some songs, there is explicit language about jails and prison. In others, we have identified themes such as forgiveness, reconciliation and the Presence of God as relevant to the type of worship that supports children and families of the incarcerated. In others, prisons and jails serve as spiritual metaphors for life's current conditions; we include them here with the reminder that for a metaphor to be effective in representing a spiritual principle, a meaningful understanding of the pictured reality helps us recognize the truth of the spiritual picture. One former inmate observes, "The first time I heard the hymn 'To God Be the Glory' after I finished my bid, it mean so much more to me when I heard the line 'The vilest *offender* who truly believes, that moment a *pardon* from Jesus receives'"(emphasis added). We have also included two songs that are part of the regular worship services in two of America's county jails.

3. Sermons, Sermon Topics and Scripture Readings

This section first includes sermon abstracts based on the lectionary for the third Sunday in September, the weekend of worship coinciding with Foreverfamily's 25th Anniversary. We had provided abstracts from which sermons can be developed for each of the primary texts of the lectionary, with special emphasis on the impact of crime and incarceration on families. The second part of this section lists a number of Biblical



passages that can either be read as scripture readings for the morning worship service, or serve as the bases for sermons, Bible studies, Church School lessons, etc. for a worship service recognizing the children and families of inmates, as well as the challenges facing the incarcerated themselves. A brief description of the incarceration related issue follows the listing of each text.

4. Litanies

Many congregations use litanies, or responsive readings, as an element of corporate worship. We have collected several from denominational sources, prison ministry worship guides, and contemporary worship resources. They bring attention to the pain and separation caused by crime and incarceration, and both God's provision for and the churches' responsibility to inmates, their children and families.

5. Web Resources

A final section lists web based resources which can be appropriated either directly, or for the stimulation of ideas- sermons, music, prayers, etc.- that can be used in a worship service that recognizes the presence of the children and families of prisoners.

In providing these resources, we hope to help congregations to stretch to see how big their "family" really is. Virtually every congregation has members who struggle with the reality of an incarcerated loved one. The question is not "if" we minister to them, but "how," because they are there- week after week.

In all of these resources, we hope to assist congregations in providing a worship experience focused on surrounding children and families affected by incarceration with the love of family- God's family because no matter what- they are forever family+.

Prayer Resources

Prayers of Invocation

Almighty God, be present in our midst. Be present with us, even as You are present with those whom we love, especially those who are incarcerated. Be glorified in our worship today. Receive all of our praise, in Jesus' name, Amen

Loving God, Mighty God, Caring God, we acknowledge and honor Your Presence in our worship today. We thank You for Your love, and for the love You have shown to our friends and families in prison. We praise You for Your might, for You are a God of deliverance. We rest in Your care, knowing that You care for us and our loved ones even more than we care for ourselves and our families. Strengthen us with Your Presence. Be glorified in our worship. In Jesus' name.

Prayers of Intercession

Father of Mercy, the secrets of all hearts are known to you alone. You know who is just and you forgive the unjust. You alone are the Almighty Judge. We are not worthy of judging anyone. Your mercy is enough for sinners. Hear our prayers for those in prison. Give them repentance and let them believe in you. Give them patience and hope in their sufferings, and bring them home again soon. Comfort their near and dear ones. Let them trust in Jesus Christ and live with hope. Amen¹

O Divine Prisoner of the sanctuary, Who for love of us and for our salvation not only enclosed Yourself within the narrow confines of human nature and then hid Yourself under the veils of the Sacramental Species, but also continually live in the tabernacle!

¹ www.lordcalls.com



Hear our prayer which rises to You from within these walls and which longs to express to You our affection, our sorrow, and the great need we have of You in our tribulations - above all, in the loss of freedom which so distresses us.

For some of us, there is probably a voice in the depths of conscience which says we are not guilty; that only a tragic judicial error has led us to this prison. In this case, we will draw comfort from remembering that You, the most August of all victims, were also condemned despite Your innocence.

Or perhaps, instead, we must lower our eyes to conceal our blush of shame, and beat our breast. But, even so, we also have the remedy of throwing ourselves into Your arms, certain that You understand all errors, forgive all sins, and generously restore Your grace to him who turns to You in repentance.

And finally, there are those among us who have succumbed to sin so often through the course of our earthly lives that even the best among men mistrust us, and we ourselves hardly know how to set out on the new road of regeneration. But despite all this, in the most hidden corner of our soul a voice of trust and comfort whispers Your words, promising us the help of Your light and Your grace if we want to return to what is good.

May we, O Lord, never forget that the day of trial is an opportune time for purifying the spirit, practicing the highest virtues, and acquiring the greatest merits. Let not our afflicted hearts be affected by that disgust which dries up everything, or by that distrust which leaves no room for brotherly sentiments and which prepared the road for bad counsel. May we always remember that, in depriving us of the freedom of our bodies, no one has been able to deprive us of freedom of the soul, which during the long hours of our solitude can rise to You to know You better and love You more each day.

Grant, O Divine Savior, help and resignation to the dear ones who mourn our absence. Grant peace and quiet to this world which has rejected us but which we love and to which we promise our co-operation as good citizens for the future.



Grant that our sorrows may be a salutary example to many souls and that they may thus be protected against the dangers of following our path. But above all, grant us the grace of believing firmly in You, of filially hoping in You, and of loving You: Who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, live and reign forever and ever.

Amen²

Gracious and Loving God, You gave strength to Your son Joseph while in prison. You protected the Hebrew children and Daniel in the midst of death row. You sent support for Jeremiah in solitary confinement. You gave John the wonderful Revelation of future things in exile. You had the Apostle Paul write that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him while in chains. You sent an Angel to free Peter from jail. You sent visitors to the prison to encourage John the Baptist. And You chose to have Jesus die an inmate's death for our sins. We know that You care for the prisoner; You love the incarcerated and their families. Grant them strength, comfort and solace today. Let them know that they are not forgotten. Grant us courage and compassion, forgiveness and fortitude to write, visit, support, and pray for the men, women and young people we know who sit even now behind prison walls. Let them know that they are not forgotten-let them know that You are there, even as You were with Joseph and Jeremiah; Daniel, Shadrach and Abednego; Peter and Paul; John the Apostle and John the Baptist; in the name of Jesus Who gives us power over death, Amen.

O Lord, Our God! We are met today to commemorate the fact that thy masterful and fatherly plan with the world and with ourselves has been carried out when thou didst permit our Lord Jesus Christ to be imprisoned that we may be free, to be declared guilty that our guilt may be taken away, to suffer that we may have joy, to be put to death that we may have life eternal. Left to ourselves we are lost. None of us deserved to be

² Pope Pius XII

rescued, not one. Yet in thy great majesty and mercy thou hast made common cause with our misery and our sin in order to lift us up. How else can we show our gratitude than by comprehending and acknowledging this mighty deed? This can only happen when the same living Saviour who suffered for us, was crucified, died and was buried, now enters into our midst. Only when he speaks to our hearts and consciences, opening them to thy love and teaching us wholly to trust in thee and to live on thy love alone. Humbly yet confidently we would ask that this may come to pass in the power of the Holy Spirit.†³

Prayers for Prisons and Correctional Institutions

Lord Jesus, for our sake you were condemned as a criminal: Visit our jails and prisons with your pity and judgment. Remember all prisoners, and bring the guilty to repentance and amendment of life according to your will, and give them hope for their future. When any are held unjustly, bring them release; forgive us, and teach us to improve our justice. Remember those who work in these institutions; keep them humane and compassionate; and save them from becoming brutal or callous. And since what we do for those in prison, O Lord, we do for You, constrain us to improve their lot. All this we ask for your mercy's sake. Amen⁴

Eternal God, Your Son Jesus said "Allow the little children to come unto me." We lift these children to You today, especially those hurt by the separation of incarceration. Pour out Your compassion upon them, and strengthen our resolve to nurture them, love them, support them and pray for them. Be present for every family in our midst impacted by incarceration, and not only those here, but in every corner of the world

³ Karl Barth, Deliverance to the Captives, p.75.

⁴ Book of Common Prayer, pg. 826.



where family life has been interrupted, and time, distance and walls loom as barriers to families being together.

God, You are a God of forgiveness. We ask Your forgiveness today for our failure to "remember those who are incarcerated as being one with them." (Hebrews 13:3) And as we receive Your forgiveness, strengthen our hearts to be agents of forgiveness as well. Help us to be ambassadors of reconciliation and channels of Your grace and restorative power.

Prayers of Dismissal/Benedictions

And now may the grace and love of God, Who by His Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and brought new freedom to us all, be our travelling companion as we go forth to serve God, and all those whom God loves.

Music Resources

Hymns (listed with author of text)

Prison, Incarceration and God's Care

"And Can It Be That I Should Gain" by Charles Wesley

"Beams of Heaven" by Charles Albert Tindley

"Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain" by John Mason Neale

"God of Grace and God of Glory" by Harry Emerson Fosdick

"In Christ There Is No East or West" by William Dunkerley

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul" by Charles Wesley

"Jesus Shall Reign" by Isaac Watts

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand," by Thomas Dorsey

"There is a Fountain Filled with Blood" by William Cowper

"To God Be the Glory" by Fannie Crosby

"When Peace Like a River" by Horatio Spafford

"When the Storms of Life are Raging, Stand by Me" by Charles Albert Tindley

The Churches' Outreach to the Prisons

"Come, Labor On" by Jane Borthwick

"Til All the Jails are Empty" by Carl Daw

"For Freedom Christ has Set me Free" by Sylvia Dunstan

"Oh Master Let Me Walk with Thee" by Washington Gladden

"How Many Doors will Open" by Richard Leach

"Here Am I, Send Me" by Daniel March



"If Jesus Goes With Me" by C. Austin Miles

"Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life" by Frank Mason North

Care for Children, Families Left Behind and Victims

"Amazing Grace" by John Newton

"He Knows Just How Much We Can Bear" by Roberta Martin

"He Will Remember Me" by E. M. Bartlett

"Hold to God's Unchanging Hand" by Jennie Wilson

"Jesus Loves the little Children" by Herbert Woolston

"Leave it There" by Charles Albert Tindley

Anthems and Other Songs

"After You've Done All You Can," by Donnie McClurkin

"Come on in the Room" (traditional opening song for women's service at Montgomery County Jail in Dayton, Ohio)

"Go Down Moses" (Negro Spiritual)

"Hallelujah, Amen" from *Judas Maccabeus* by Ludwig van Beethoven

"I Need You to Survive" by Hezekiah Walker

"Rejoice in the Lamb" by Benjamin Britten (from a translation of the poem "Jubilate Agno" written by Christopher Smart, an 18th Century British writer who died in prison)

"Somebody Prayed for Me" by Donnie McClurkin

"This Little Light of Mine" (traditional: opening song for worship at Unit 12 of George W. Hill Correctional Facility, Delaware County, PA)

"We Fall Down, But We Get Up" by Donnie McClurkin

"We Shall Overcome" (traditional)



Sermons, Sermon Topics, and Scripture Readings

Lectionary Readings

Proper 19 (24) Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 16, 2012	Proverbs 1:20-33 Psalm 19	Isaiah 50:4- 9a Psalm 116:1- 9 or <i>Wisdom of Solomon</i> 7:26 - 8:1	James 3:1-12	Mark 8:27-38
--	-------------------------------------	--	--------------	--------------

Proverbs 1:20-33: *Wisdom Cries Out in the Streets*

This text points to the failure of society to seek wisdom and knowledge. And while race and class clearly affect to growth of mass incarceration in our society, it is also true that many who do find themselves behind bars have struggled with decision making. A sermon on decision making, opting for good choices, would also call for church leadership, parents and other elders to be voices of wisdom that both speak and demonstrate wisdom. Wisdom "cries aloud!" It does not whisper! Wisdom is "in the streets!" It is public witness, not a private affair. Families should be repositories of wisdom, passing it along from generation to generation. Churches should be fountains of wisdom, pouring it out upon the faithful in truth and application.

Psalm 19: *The Glory of the Lord*

The psalmist paints a dramatic and awesome picture of God's glory. It fills the skies above and is embodied in God's truth on earth. An inmate, however, seldom sees the full wonder of a night sky and has limited, time constrained view of God's "tent for the sun." But God's glory still prevails, even within the walls of confinement. The bright smile of her children becomes the stars that shine against the darkened horizon of her prison. The arms of a loved one embrace her as "a bridegroom from the wedding canopy." The vastness of God's reach reminds us that though we may be separated from a loved one in prison, God is still present there as well. As the heavens cannot contain the glory of the Lord, so the prison walls cannot keep it out.

Isaiah 50:4-9: *The Lord Helps Me*

The writer describes the difficulties he has had with others, but affirms that in the midst of it all, the Lord has helped him. How the families of the incarcerated need to know that in the midst of interpersonal difficulties, the Lord helps! We can resist shame,



endure insult, and deflect disgrace- all directed towards inmates and their families- knowing that God is on our side. Yes, our side- for God will vindicate, God will contend with those who contend with us. God stands with us in these difficult moments. But God's Presence is not for comfort only- the Lord has given us "the tongue of a teacher" to "sustain the weary with a word." Through letters and visits to prisons, we can sustain the weary. By standing with the families left behind, we can sustain the weary. By mentoring children of the incarcerated, we can sustain the weary. It is the Lord Who helps me "sustain the weary."

James 3:1-12: Navigating with a Flawed Rudder

Jesus told us that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." So when we hear words from a troubled tongue, the source is always a troubled soul. We live in a society where personal attacks are standard political campaign fare, and harsh criticism receives the stamp of "keeping it real." Our society has a troubled tongue because it has a troubled soul. The blessing and cursing which proceed from the same mouth reflects the "tug-warfare" of meanness and mercy, charity and character assassination, loving and loathing. How do we speak of the incarcerated? Is "seeking justice" just code for "seeking revenge?" Do our tongues contribute to stigma and shame, or do they call out for restoration and reconciliation? Do we have words of grace for family members left behind? Can we set our tongues on a course of encouragement for children separated from mothers and fathers by incarceration, time and distance? We have a troubled tongue, a troubled soul, a flawed rudder- but with the Lord to quiet and steer our souls, we can find the grace to be sons and daughters of encouragement, rather than cursing, for those "made in the likeness of God."

Mark 8:27-38: A Revelation in Enemy Territory

When Jesus asked the question "Who do people say that I am?" he chose an interesting venue. Caesarea Philippi was occupied territory. It would be difficult to look down any street and not see soldiers (i.e. law enforcement) standing watch, making rounds, keeping the peace for the Roman occupation. But the presence of the militia does not keep Peter silent- he declares that Jesus "is the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Easy to say in the glory of a Sunday service, but not so facile in the midst of occupation. Easy to say in the comfort of the pews, but not so in the dusty streets of occupation. There are inmates who name the name of Jesus in occupied territory. Families name the name of Jesus while facing separation from loved ones. We are all called to name the name of Jesus even in the face of opposition. If we take Matthew's version here, then we also know the Father in heaven who gave Peter the revelation, shows up in those uncomfortable places. Uncomfortable places like visitation rooms need the Presence of God.



Scripture References and Readings

The suggestions below point to texts which can be used for preaching, scripture and responsive readings, Bible study, etc. They reflect a variety of approaches to the reality of crime and incarceration in our communities from the plight of victims and their families (Rachel), inmates (Joseph, Jeremiah, et. al.), families of the incarcerated (Mary), and others impacted by crime and incarceration.

Genesis 39-46: The Story of Joseph in prison. Not only does God use Joseph in prison, but God uses Joseph's experience in prison to position him to bless the whole nation, and- in particular- bless and be reconciled to his family after prison.

Psalms 137: The psalmist reflects on the Babylonian captivity, noting the pain of separation and desire to be reunited with home.

Isaiah 49: 1-13: This text reflects on God's call to those returning from captivity. God tells them to "Come out" and leave the life of the captive behind, and "Appear," and show their gifts and talents. God's promise is then that "they shall feed along the way," as God makes provision for them.

Isaiah 58: The prophet points to the "chosen fast" to "loose the bands of wickedness, to undo heavy burdens," and to free us from oppression and that we break every yoke.

Jeremiah 9:17-24: This call for the "weeping women" bids us to lament the loss of our youth and the plagues of our community, even as in the time of the decline of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 31:15-20 (cited also in **Matthew 2:16-18**): "Rachel weeping" for her children, reflecting upon the destruction of young life, victimization by crime in the cases of both Pharaoh and Herod.

Jeremiah 37 and 38: Jeremiah in solitary confinement until a man named Ebed-Melech spoke to the king in his behalf. He organized a group of 30 men to come see and rescue Jeremiah from his confinement.

Daniel 3: Shadrach Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace represent a form of death row and execution. God delivers them, initially by God's Presence with them in the fire.

Daniel 2, 5, 6: Daniel and all the wise men receive a death sentence in Daniel 2, but God uses him to bless the king, and all the sentences are commuted. In Chapter 5, this man who had been under a sentence of death is used by God to speak to the king. In

Chapter 6 he receives another death sentence, but God spares his life, and goes on to use Daniel mightily after he is delivered from the lion's den.

Matthew 11: John the Baptist is incarcerated, but evidently had access to friends and followers. He sends word to Jesus, and Jesus sends word back to him. Jesus communicates with a prisoner.

Matthew 25: Jesus tells his followers that visiting the prisoner is one of the issues on which believers would be judged. But note also that some in the audience may have been prisoners, become prisoners, or had family in prison at the time. To them, the story of the sheep is the good news that they would be visited!

Acts 5: The apostles are incarcerated, but an angel visits them and sets them free.

Acts 12: The Apostle Peter incarcerated, set free by God's Angel, but the church is hesitant to let him back in.

Acts 16: Paul and Silas sing hymns of praise to God while in jail. They minister to the prison guard and his family after a miraculous release.

Philippians: written by the Apostle Paul while in jail; see especially Chapters 1 and 4

2 Timothy 1-2: Paul is not ashamed of his chains and celebrates Epaphroditus for not being ashamed of Paul's incarceration.

Litanies and Responsive Readings

Leader: O God, creator of heaven and earth, you are our redeemer, our strength and our hope.



People: I was sick and you visited me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see me. Thank you for your healing power.

Leader: God, you are greater than the marginalization thrust on us by organized forces and institutionalized agencies. You are omnipotent and able to do anything but fail.

People: I was sick and you visited me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see me. Thank you for your deliverance power.

Leader: God, we cry out to you today and stand in the gap for those who have been disenfranchised and victimized at the hands of others. We trust you to bring about a change in all of our lives.

People: I was sick and you visited me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see me. Thank you for your restorative power.

Leader: We ask for healing for those who have lost loved ones at the hands of others; healing for those who are behind jail and prison bars; and healing for those in the communities that will struggle to embrace them upon their return.

People: I was sick and you visited me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see me. Thank you for your reconciling power.

Leader: Almighty God, help us to love, forgive, reach out, and open doors to all whom you send our way . as well as to those who have yet to realize that they need our help. Lead us and guide us each and every day.

People: I was sick and you visited me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see me. Thank you for your transformative power.

ALL: Help us God to forgive the blood that has stained many hands, the bruises that have hurt many bodies, and the ruins that have come to many families. In the midst of all that has plagued our communities and challenged our families and faith, it is our heart's desire to be healed. As we desire to be healed, we want the scales of justice to balance while the grace of God prevails. We want love to be released and healing to come to our communities. We are now moving towards a Healing Community⁵.

A Prison Litany

⁵ Dr. Allyson Abrams, "What Shall We Then Do? An Interdenominational Guide for Creating Healing Communities," www.healingcommunitiesusa.org/Pages/ResourcesandPublications.aspx



Leader: For the ministry that God has called us to among prisoners and members of staff, let us pray to the Lord.

Leader: God the Father,

People: Have mercy on us.

Leader: God the Holy Spirit,

People: Have mercy on us.

Leader: Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, Whose unity draws us together,

People: Have mercy on us.

Leader: From all evil and mischief; from pride, vanity and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred and malice, and from all evil intent,

People: Good Lord deliver us.

Leader: From laziness, worldliness and love of money; from hardness of heart and contempt for your word and laws,

People: Good Lord deliver us.

Leader: From the sins of body and mind; from all the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil, and from anger and violence in word and deed,

People: Good Lord deliver us.

THE NEEDS OF THOSE INSIDE

Leader: For those in prison for the first time and for the families and friends from whom they are separated. Lord in your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those made hard and cynical by life in prison; for those who feel no sorrow for what they have done, and for those who are thinking of further crime. Lord in your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who break the good order and discipline of prison life; for those in the segregation unit; and for those seeking protection. Lord in your mercy

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who create anxiety and fear; for the weak who are abused by the strong; for those who desperately long to be accepted; for the unloved and the unwanted who receive neither letter nor visit; Lord in your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those whose faith in Christ is mocked; for those who are taunted for going to Chapel, for reading the Bible and praying. For those who by their false and evil beliefs lead the simple away from the truth in Christ. Lord in your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who stand firm in the faith and witness to Christ in word and in deed. Lord in your mercy

People: Hear our prayer.

THE NEEDS OF THOSE OUTSIDE

Leader: For those who depend on alcohol to give them courage or to drown their misery and for those whose lives and families have been destroyed through alcohol abuse. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: For those who are addicted to drugs, and for those who sell them. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: For those contemplating crime today; for those arrested and taken to the cells for the first time in their lives. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: For those who advise the innocent to plead guilty; for those who have abandoned hope of a fair trial, and for those who are victims of rough justice, Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: For the partners and families of prisoners as they suffer the 'second sentence', the loneliness of separation and the difficulties of visiting. Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: For those who are worried about the lack of money and the debts they have incurred. For those who deprive themselves for the benefit of their children and their partner in prison.

People: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Leader: For those who through word and deed bring true humanity to relationships and show compassion to the needs of others; let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: For those whose thoughts turn into prayer and whose prayer turns into action; let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: For those who show forth the gifts of the Spirit in love, joy, peace; for those who are patient, good, gentle, self-controlled and faithful; let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: For those whose love bear all things, hopes all things, endures all things, whose love never ends; let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

**All: Lord, make us instruments of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let us give your love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is sadness, joy.
Where there is darkness, light.
For in giving we receive,
in pardoning we are pardoned,
and in dying we are born into eternal life⁶.**

⁶ www.ekkleisia.co.uk/resources/liturgy/litany_for_prisons_week

An Anti-Incarceration Litany

Leader: Sisters and Brothers, we gather on this Anti-Incarceration/Justice Sunday remembering that "God bringeth out those which are bound with chains."

People: Beloved, what chains are broken this day?

Leader: The chains of domination and deception that support and legitimate rising incarceration rates.

People: Beloved, what chains are broken this day?

Leader: The chains of prejudice and fear that infiltrate the hearts of our sisters and brothers who believe criminalizing stereotypes and who value profit over people.

People: Beloved, what chains are broken this day?

Leader: The chains of lying and hatred, chains of distrust and greed, chains of racism and classism.

People: For it is written "And behold, the angel of the Lord came, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. Is this not what The Creator has chosen us for? "To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo heavy burdens, to free us from oppression and that we break every yoke?" Through education, prayer and mobilization we celebrate the breaking of chains of injustice! Today we celebrate that justice may prevail!"⁷

Web Resources

1. <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2008/songs-prison>

⁷ Nolan Williams, Jr., *African-American Lectionary*. Modified by Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc., 2012.



An overview of prison ministry and worship prepared for the Reformed Church of America

2. <http://www.stainer.co.uk/hymns/prisoner.html>

A British resource guide to music and prisoners

3. http://www.prisonministry.episcopalmaryland.org/Prayers_of_the_People.htm

An intercessory prayer for Prison Ministry Sunday, prepared for the Episcopal Church by Rev. Phebe McPherson

4. <http://www.pulpit.org/2012/04/easter-sunrise/>

A resurrection sermon on mass incarceration by Harold Dean Trulear in "The Living Pulpit."

5. <http://www.thecrimereport.org/viewpoints/2012-08-prisoners-families-and-houses-of-worship>

A call to congregations to develop caring means of worship for families of the incarcerated, posted in John Jay College of Criminal Justice: "The Crime Report."

6. www.healingcommunitiesusa.org/publications

"Levitate" a rap song composed for Healing Communities Prison Ministry and Reentry Initiative by Ron Davis, GLOBE Community Ministries

Lyrics:

Levitate: to rise or float in or as if in the air especially in seeming defiance of gravitation

INTRO

(Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. *I Have a Dream* excerpt)

we have also come to this hallowed spot



to remind America of the fierce urgency of now...

*this is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off
or to take the tranquilizing course of gradualism...*

Now is the time...

To make real the promises of democracy...

Now is the time...

*To rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation
to the sunlit path of racial justice...*

Now is the time...

VERSE 1

I believe in the dream
I believe in a place
called the land of the free
& the home of the brave but
all that I see
is a whole lotta folks
in a world full hope
in a whole lotta pain
certified crooks
from the street to the banks
now the people gotta sleep
in the street



by the bank
kids gotta eat
so the parents go to work
but they barely getting paid
what the labor really worth
barely even saved
then I started havin bills
barely got to live-
when life started gettin real
bottom of my class
& I barely graduated
slang indicatin
that I'm sorta educated
sorta out of work
so I'm sorta aggravated
I know I'm outta place
feelin very isolated
rights violated
now everything is changed

I'm so full of rage
I will neva be the same
(so I Levitateõ)

HOOK



SO I LEVITATE...
I MEDITATE...
ELEVATED THOUGHTS
OF A BETTER PLACE
CHILD LIKE THOUGHTS
OF A BETTER DAY
WHEN I'M TRYNA LET GO OF
THE BITTER PAIN
I'MMA LEVITATE
GOTTA STAY ABOVE
GETTING BETTER EVERYDAY
THAT I'M WAKIN UP
PUTTIN BACK TOGETHER
WHAT WAS TORE APART
MAKIN FEAR DISAPPERING
FROM A BROKEN HEART

I'MMA LEVITATE...

VERSE 2

another day
another homicide
on the streets
where we dyin
for peace



not a sign of relief
name a city
or a state
in the whole United States-
and a place in the world where
crime doesn't reach
and a soul in the world that
never felt loss
every country on the planet
got a military force
military mission
so we gotta go on tour
we fightin to survive
so we gotta go to war
fightin for the rights
& and the people
that I live with

fightin for the freedoms
we believe
that God has given
livin in the middle
of the war on terrorism
violent individuals
& crooked politicians



lookin for a way
where I don't gotta
pull a trigger
lookin for provision
got a promise to deliver
dreamin of a life where
we don't gotta suffer
drownin in the pain
but it will never
take me under

(cause I Levitate)

HOOK

BRIDGE

gotta levitate...
float above the pain...
but my feet are on the ground...
I can feel the weight
it's comin from the hate
now its tryna pull me down...
but I refuse to break...
I refuse to suffocate...
I gotta concentrate

got a lotta things at stake

so I gotta to Levitate

