Worcester Diocesan Criminal Justice Affairs Group
Prayer Guide - November 2026

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

The Diocese of Worcester hosts a group whose focus is criminal justice and offers a faith perspective on criminal justice matters & raises awareness of the issues.

CJAG offers this bi-monthly prayer guide which we hope will be useful for personal & intercessory prayer in local parishes. Do pass it on to those who would be interested and encourage its usage. Welcome to the CJAG Prayer Guide for November.

The safety of those working in prisons

Prison overcrowding remains a major political and human rights issue affecting prisoners and staff. Officers face heavy physical and psychological demands, comparatively poor pay, inadequate wellbeing support, limited career progression and chronic stress in overcrowded, violent prisons. Long shifts in crowded, violent, drug-affected prisons are stressful; officers experience higher rates of PTSD, anxiety and depression than the general workforce. Staff are significantly outnumbered on prison wings and face greater risk with less support. Violence, self-harm and overcrowding figures reflect a workforce in crisis.

Experienced prison officers have declined sharply - over a quarter have under three years' experience, weakening understanding of prison dynamics and risk management. Recruitment has slowed dramatically, leaving staff supervising too many prisoners with little support in overcrowded, understaffed, deteriorating prisons - conditions are increasingly described as untenable.

The well-evidenced link between staffing and safety is direct: insufficient supervision and restricted regimes mean longer cell confinement, greater tension, missed opportunities to defuse disputes and more violence. Staff assaults average 113 per 1000 prisoners, with 11% classified as serious.

God of protection and peace, we lift before you all who work within our prisons - officers, healthcare teams, chaplains, educators, and support staff. Grant them courage in moments of uncertainty, wisdom in times of challenge, and compassion in every encounter. Shield them from harm, both seen and unseen. Strengthen their minds and bodies for the demands of each day. Surround them with respect, understanding, and the assurance that their work matters deeply. May their presence bring calm where there is unrest, and hope where there is despair. Bless their families with peace of mind, and guide them all safely home at the end of each shift. Amen

Especially we pray for:

- The protection of all working in prisons
- Staff recruitment with those leaving the prison service outpacing arrivals
- The wellbeing of newly recruited prison staff and those providing them with support
- Those assaulted by prisoners, those on sick leave and those living in fear of being attacked
- Safe working conditions, manageable workloads, confidential support and post-incident care
- Safer conditions for prisoners thereby protecting staff
- The operational challenges for prisons created by staff shortages, making it harder to maintain safety, ensure prisoners attend work and education, and allow prisoners enough time out of their cells
- The risks to prisoners and staff during extreme temperatures with limited cooling options and poorly ventilated accommodation.