

St Luke's Charity for June 2021

The Prison Fellowship

“We believe no one is beyond hope”

This month the congregation has chosen to support the work of *Prison Fellowship*, a charity that works among and supports prisoners. The strapline above focusses their vitally important ministry and as our own Bishop James steps down from his role, Bishop Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester steps into the role as Patron alongside Rev Jonathan Aiken.

Over the years Christians in the UK have responded to Christ's call to visit those in prison (Matthew 25). Reformers such as John Howard and Elizabeth Fry did much to alleviate the appalling prison conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries. Christians influenced 19th century prison legislation which provided for individual cells instead of dormitories and for the appointment of three key members of staff – governor, doctor and chaplain.

Prison Fellowship was founded in the United States in 1976 by Charles W. Colson, following his release from prison after serving a sentence for a “Watergate” related crime. At about the same time, in England, Sylvia Mary Alison believed God was calling her to develop Christian ministry in our prisons and she heard about the founding of Prison Fellowship in the USA which she believed was the answer to her prayers and so in *1979 Prison Fellowship England and Wales was founded.*

Today it works in prison across our land with a vision that every prisoner has access to support and prayer. Their mission is to show Christ's love to prisoners by coming alongside them and supporting them. They seek through prayer and practical care to help, support and develop a Christian ministry to prisoners and their families and do this through our

network of volunteers and currently have over 2,500 of them across England and Wales. St Luke's echoes their work in ensuring through its own mission and ministry no one is beyond hope and this is our prayer as we support their predicament and support the work of Prison Fellowship.

More details of the work of the charity can be found on their website and you are invited during June to support their work either through the envelopes available in church or by giving direct to the charity itself via www.prisonfellowship.org.uk.

Reverend Anne Bourne