

On Sunday 5 July, prisoners and their families will be able to worship together during the first-ever online prison church service broadcast by the Church of England.

The service will be broadcast from 9am on prison television and radio, as well as on the Church of England's [website](#), [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

This means that, for the first time, prisoners and their families will be able to attend the same church service, wherever they may be. Worshippers outside of the prison service are also welcome to attend.

Recorded at three sites - HMP Stocken in Rutland, HMP Low Newton in Durham and HMP Pentonville in London - the service will include contributions from prison staff and chaplains, along with prayers, reflections and artwork written and created by prisoners.

The service, with the theme of hope, will be led by Reverend Helen Dearnley, Anglican chaplaincy adviser for HM Prison and Probation Service.

Speaking from the chapel of HMP Stocken prison, Reverend Helen Dearnley said that the online service is “enabling us wherever we are to unite in hope and prayer and praise.”

She said: “Today for the first time, those in prison and their families will be able to worship virtually together, and all of us, separated from our communities by coronavirus, can share in this worship.”

Lucy Frazer QC MP, Prisons and Probation Minister at the Ministry of Justice said:

“To prevent outbreaks of coronavirus in our prisons, we have temporarily put in place a restricted regime and paused all social visits to help protect staff, prisoners and the public.”

It is great to see examples of how technology is allowing prisoners to connect remotely with their families, and I am delighted that we can continue to do that with our first-ever virtual prison church service.

“I would like to thank all of our prison staff who have made this possible - you truly are hidden heroes.”

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