

Welcome to the FWW Prayer Guide for February. We hope it will be useful for personal prayer, but also for those who lead intercessions in services. Do pass it on to others. Any feedback from use of the Guide would be most welcome.

We also use the Guide as the basis for our monthly online prayer meeting, on the first Wednesday of each month. The February meeting will be on Feb 5th from 1.00 – 1.30 p.m. For the Zoom link, and any feedback, please email dickjohnson@faithatwork.org.uk. The guide is in three parts: an introduction to the theme; a written prayer or collect; and finally, specific items for prayer for this month.

Shopworkers at risk, as retail crime spirals

The British Retail Consortium (BRC), the largest trade organisation in the sector, has just issued its annual crime survey. It makes sobering reading.¹ Violence and abuse against shopworkers is being recorded nationally at more than 2,000 incidents per day, a rise of 50% compared to the year before. Reasons for this include the growth in theft from shops,² increasingly by organised crime gangs, and a worrying rise in the use of violence, or the threat of violence. One shop owner, quoted in the BBC article, reported being punched in the face by a 17 year old girl when he challenged her.

Most of FWW's chaplains visit in the retail sector, and are likely to hear first hand the impact this has on businesses and workers. Just listening to such experiences and anxieties is a Gospel ministry of compassion and care. More than this, listening, with empathy and attention, is an act of solidarity with victims (or potential victims) of such violence, reflecting gospel values of peace, love, justice and life in all its fulness (John 10v10).

**Almighty God, who in Christ confronted the violence of our fallen humanity,
and revealed the transforming power of the resurrection;
we pray for all who experience abuse, prejudice and violence whilst at work.
Enable and inspire chaplains to be ministers of your hope, love and peace,
as they stand with those who are vulnerable and anxious;
We pray in the name of your risen son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen**

Especially we pray for:

- All workers, especially in the retail sector, who face violence from customers and thieves; for safety and protection (*Be specific in your prayers, praying for those who work in the shops you use.*)
- The police, investigating and pursuing incidents of theft and violence in shops, often overwhelmed by the scale of the problem.³
- Those who perpetrate such violence and crime; for a turning away from actions that cause hurt to others.
- Chaplains as they visit and support workers who can be anxious about the threat of violence and crime.
- The FWW Chaplaincy Impact Survey, now underway, that will gather feedback from those involved with our chaplaincy work, and help us plan for chaplaincy over the next three years.
- New volunteers to become chaplains to join our existing teams in Redditch, Kidderminster, and Pershore in particular.
- Those in our FWW fellowship who are unwell, for healing, peace and hope – especially Stuart Sandys, team leader in Pershore.
- In our **cycle of prayer for the work of FWW**, this month we pray for:
 - Chaplains in Upton – Amy Waring, Richard Barley and the businesses they visit.

¹ [Retail crime “spiralling out of control”](#). And see also the report by the BBC on Jan 30th [UK shoplifting on the rise and more brazen, new survey says. - BBC News](#)

² According to the BRC in 2023/24 there were 20 million reported incidents of theft – 55,000 a day - resulting in losses of £2.2 billion.

³ West Mercia Police are developing dedicated teams of officers to address growing retail crime and violence, and the government has announced, in the King's Speech, plans to introduce a specific offence of assault of a retail worker.