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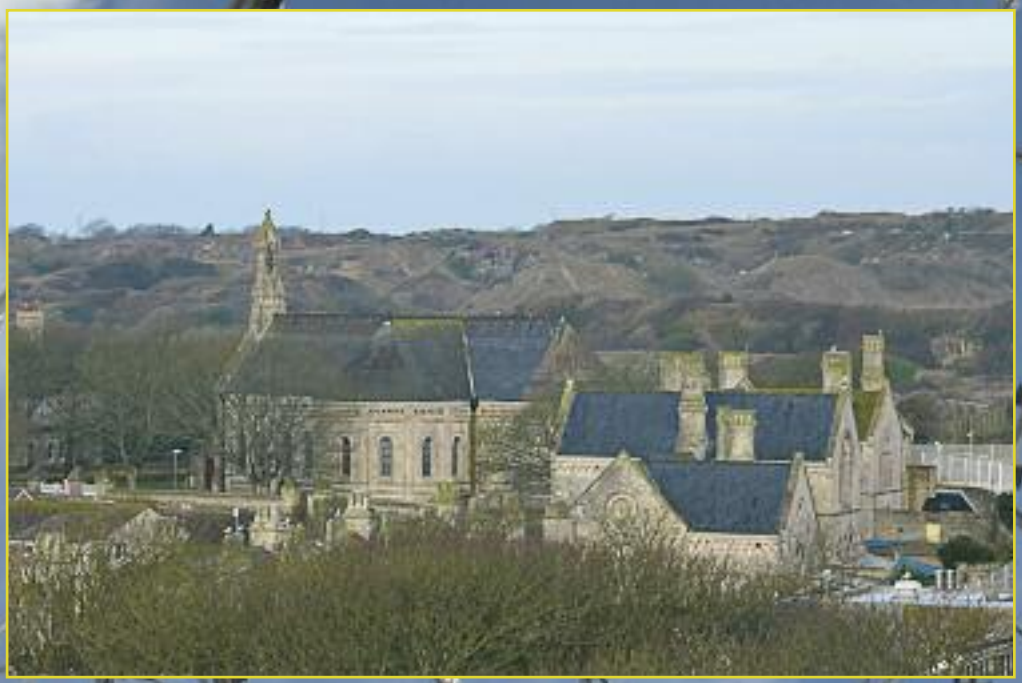

Faith in Confinement:

Believing in Change — the Contribution of Prison Chaplaincy

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St Irenaeus, the second century Bishop of Lyons, wrote, 'The Glory of God is a human being fully alive'. That belief is at the heart of my ministry as a prison Chaplain. St Irenaeus' words echo those of my mother who, when she was dying of cancer, would say 'Live life'. In her final days she discovered the freedom to live without fear and to cherish every moment. She wanted that epiphany to be born in all her visitors without the need for a terminal illness. To live life cherishing each moment and being fully alive can give a very different sort of 'buzz'; it can release prisoners from a life of crime. Prison chaplaincy contributes to that release by enabling prisoners to see themselves differently, to truly value their own lives so that they can come to value the lives of others: to live full lives themselves and not to mar the life living of others.

New Identities: from Offender to being a person 'Made Good'

The seven pathways from offending have been key in developing an approach to reducing reoffending that takes seriously offender needs. By identifying an offender's needs explicitly and objectively, interventions and support can be put in place to meet those needs and thereby reduce risk. But a moment's reflection on our own lives, if looked at in terms of the risk/need principle, reminds us that we are more than the sum of our deficiencies. People are not criminals all the time (to paraphrase, Archbishop William Temple, 'No one is a criminal and nothing else.'), they are capable of other and better ways of acting. But many prisoners get trapped in a criminal identity that supports offending through a variety of cognitive and social props. Although addressing risk and need can be part of building a new identity, key to sustaining this is a new narrative that brings it all together; and a supportive social group to sustain this new identity. This is why some prisons have opted for an informal 'Eighth Pathway' called spirituality or faith but which could be renamed 'Bringing it all Together'. This connects with 'Belief in Change' and accredited programme which is being piloted in Channings Wood and Risley prisons, a case study of which is described below.

This process of developing a new identity, of bringing together the often fractured parts of person's inner world that means that they have not been fully alive, is at the heart of what Grendon does as a therapeutic community. In all prisons, the Chaplaincy can be key in helping people develop and support a new identity, a new narrative thus contributing to the goal of reducing reoffending and supporting the journey of desistance, a journey away from crime.

Shadd Maruna, one of the pioneers of the idea of desistance, has explored in detail the factors that support people living positive, crime free lives. Among these he has looked at the role of faith. He coined the phrase 'knifing off'[2] to describe the way in which some offenders were able to establish a new identity through faith by talking in terms of being given a fresh start, a new beginning, a fresh identity that meant they were no longer defined by the person that they were — their criminal identity had been knifed off. This process needs to be handled with care as people do need to learn from their mistakes and not use 'knifing off' as a cover for not addressing some of the issues that led them into offending. There is still a need to learn skills that support new decision making that led them to prison in the first place. But the key idea in Maruna's study is that faith gave people a chance at a new start, freed them to see themselves differently and not be chained to a past identity.

The other crucial finding in Maruna's work is the importance of resettlement into a supportive faith community for those who have come to faith or rekindled their faith whilst 'inside'. Coming to faith or the renewal of an existing faith practice whilst 'inside' can be key to good prison adjustment[3] but on its own

1. I also wish to thank Liz Bird, Lynette Emmanuel and the 'Belief in Change' Communities at Channings Wood and Risley prisons for helping me to Believe in Change.
2. Maruna , S and Roy, K (2007) 'Amputation or Reconstruction' *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice Volume 23 104-124*; Maruna, S, Wilson L and Curran K (2006) 'Why God is Often Found Behind Bars: Prison Conversions and the Crisis of Self-Narrative' *Research in Human Development 3* 161-184.
3. A comprehensive review is found in Burnside, J, Loucks, N, Adler J.R and Rose, G (2005) *My Brother's Keeper: Faith-based units in prisons* Willan Publishing Devon.

does not have a huge impact of reoffending rates. But if 'faith inside' is combined with a supportive faith community on the outside, which in reality means a group of people who will support the person's new identity, then a significant impact on reoffending may be seen. Before reflecting further on resettlement, it is important to consider religious conversion in prison.

Every so often the press runs a story about forced conversions, especially to Islam. But when religious conversion is looked at carefully and appreciatively as in the work of Alison Liebling,[4] a richer understanding of conversion emerges. Especially for prisoners who have long sentences, conversion is actually about discovering a new sense of meaning which makes sense of the past, offers a new way of seeing the future and of establishing a new, pro-social identity. Spiritual practice gives order to the day, the week and even the year marked as it is by fasts and festivals. Being part of a group of people who practise their faith can give real hope and support. Although much work has looked at conversion to Islam, the principles apply to people who convert to other faiths in prison. Buddhism and Paganism are two interesting cases in point as many people who come to practise these on the 'inside' were not part of such communities on the outside.

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Social Capital: Relationship and Resettlement

To sustain the changed sense of self that comes about through conversion or renewed faith practice, through-the-gate work is crucial. Whilst the Christian community has been engaged in this work for many years as a result of having had people in prison, for other faith communities this work is a relatively new. Even coming to terms with having members of their community in prison can be challenging, bringing as it does for some a sense of shame to the family.

Imaginative work is being done in this area recognising that a 'one size fits all' model is not going to work because different faith communities have different shapes. Some examples will illustrate this and underline the importance for 'prime providers' in the Community Rehabilitation Companies under Transforming Rehabilitation, to find ways of engaging with faith communities to ensure that the added value that faith can bring to desistance can be realised. As mentioned, although there are some lifelong Buddhist practitioners in jail, especially foreign nationals, most come to Buddhist practice on the inside. This, combined with the fact that many local Buddhist groups meet in people's homes, pose particular resettlement challenges. Responding to this the Buddhist prison Chaplaincy, Angulimala, which is based at the Forest Hermitage near Warwick is working in partnership with NOMS to develop a project called 'Let Go'. The hope is for the Forest Hermitage to be a place where ex offenders can attend groups to build on the practice that they developed on the inside, to make retreat to deepen practice and to join a web-based community of practice to keep them engaged and motivated when facing challenges. This is a stepping-stone to joining a local group in due course.

Within the Muslim community, charities are growing to address housing needs, mentoring and capacity building within the community to encourage volunteering so that ministry to prisoners and ex prisoners becomes more embedded in the community as a whole. Capacity building within local faith communities has been the goal of a number of events organised by the Wormwood Scrubs Community Chaplaincy. Presentations to introduce the through-the-gate work have been held in a Sikh Gurdwara, Hindu Temple and Mosque as well as in the local Anglican Church. The aim is to attract mentors from across the faith communities and to raise awareness among those communities who are still coming to terms with having to face the fact that numbers of their young people have been caught up in criminal activities.

The Jewish community is very supportive of people on release but focus on looking forward rather than revisiting past failures. The Pagan community, like the Buddhist, often have meetings in homes though some are in more public spaces. It is exploring ways to develop guidelines to keep both the ex offender and the community safe but is also developing mentoring schemes to support pagan prisoners on release. A key organisation that helps groups to develop this work is the Community Chaplaincy Association. There is a strong sense of collaboration based on the recognition that many Churches have already developed good practice guidelines relating both to child protection and resettlement and so groups will work together to build on best practice.

4. Liebling, A, Arnold, H, Straub, C (2011) *An exploration of staff-prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor 12 years on*. Cambridge Institute of Criminology Prison Research Centre. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217381/staff-prisoner-relations-whitemoor.pdf

Chaplaincy is well placed to respond to the challenges posed by Transforming Rehabilitation and Resettlement Prisons as Chaplains always work as part of an external faith community having to be authorised by that community to work in prison. The specification underpinning much chaplaincy work, PSI 51/2011 Faith and Pastoral Care of Prisoners has two mandatory outputs recognising the centrality of this work. They relate to contact with chaplaincy for prisoners prior to release and ensuring links are maintained with external faith and community groups. There is also the opportunity for community-based faith leaders who may have supported the prisoner before conviction to offer support and where appropriate to assist in reintegration upon release.

To summarise, discovering or rediscovering a religious faith or a new sense of meaning and purpose can help to integrate other experiences of rehabilitation in the prison. This is an eighth 'bringing it all together' pathway which recognises that we are more than the sum of our deficiencies. This sense of a new identity is supported through engagement with faith based community groups coming into the prison — volunteers who believe that change is possible making it more possible for the prisoners to believe this of themselves and thus help to sustain a new self narrative. Whilst this process assists in prison adjustment, it can also impact on reoffending if it is combined with through-the-gate support and an engaged faith community upon release

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Post Traumatic Growth and the Statutory Duties: Possibilities of New Identities

The idea of 'post traumatic stress' is well known. But recent work in psychology is exploring why some people seem to go through traumatic experiences but come through it stronger and more resilient. The term 'post traumatic growth' has been coined for this phenomenon.[5] What seems to make the difference is enabling people to be real about the feelings they experience as a result of what has happened to them. It is also important that they have time to explore the meaning of the experience — in other words, to allow a new sense of identity to coalesce around the experience — for example, enabling a person to grow from a sense of being a 'victim' into a new identity as a 'survivor'.

Imprisonment for most is a traumatic experience — even for those who may have served a number of sentences and certainly for those receiving long or indeterminate sentences. Within prison life itself there can also be traumatic experiences: the loss of a loved one outside, or the experience of violence or bullying on the inside. The statutory duties of the Chaplaincy, enshrined in the 1952 Prison Act and developed in the present PSI 51/2011, require Chaplains to visit daily new receptions, those who are in segregation or cellular confinement, those in health care facilities and those preparing for release as well as those identified as being at risk of self-harm. Chaplains are well placed to be part of the process of turning stressful experiences into opportunities for growth and the development of a new sense of meaning. This requires that prisoners are given time to reflect and that 'doing the stats' for Chaplains should never become a tick box exercise. Too much is at stake — such visits may be the window of opportunity a person needs at a liminal moment in their life to see things afresh and begin or reinforce a journey of change.

Corporate Worship/Meditation and Religious Education: Developing Internal Capital

In the literature on desistance the idea of internal capital relates to the development of self esteem, self efficacy, a healthy sense of shame, elements of regret, hope and emotional self management. Looking at faith practice in prison through this lens helps to frame such activities in ways that link them to supporting the journey of desistance. All faith traditions affirm the worth of human beings — those espousing reincarnation recognise that being born as a human gives a unique opportunity for spiritual practice and so raises the possibility of liberation from the wheel of death and rebirth. For faiths that do not see the world in this way there is an acknowledgement of the value of the person. St Irenaeus' words, quoted above, are one example from within the Christian tradition.

Given that prisoners' low self esteem can have a negative effect of their motivation to change, being part of a community that affirms a person's intrinsic worth can be an important corrective. Volunteers from

5. Joseph, S 2012 'What doesn't kill us'.*The Psychologist* 25 816-819.

outside communities can be especially helpful in this process as prisoners recognise that they come entirely by choice and can see their value affirmed through the consistent support they receive. Faith traditions also encourage a sense of personal responsibility which can be allied with an experience of support. So taking responsibility for actions in the past need not simply be crushing but can lead on to an understanding that the future may offer new possibilities and that regret/repentance should be followed by a commitment to change. The support of both a 'higher power' to use the language of AA and of chaplains and volunteers on the inside and a faith community on the outside furthers this process.

Religious education classes are crucially important to develop a rounded understanding of the faith tradition both for prisoners discovering a faith and those who are renewing their beliefs. They can also be opportunities to make links with other elements of the prison regime to give a new sense of purpose and direction. One interesting example is the notion of 'right livelihood' found in Buddhism or the idea of 'works' in Rastafarianism. Both ideas make explicit the link between faith practice and work or productive activity. This can lead to a new sense of motivation for work or education in prison as it provides a way of seeing this as an extension of spiritual practice rather than simply as another part of the regime. Work may also be seen as reparative, a making good for the harm done to the victim and community. A new sense of meaning can bring a deeper engagement and support a new narrative so prisoners see themselves as able to contribute to society in a positive way in the future.

All traditions teach a variety of methods for prayer and meditation. This can be key in supporting emotional self management. Discovering ways of dealing with anxiety or frustration may not be the prime purpose of learning to pray or meditate but it can be a helpful adjunct to support other techniques learned through Interventions. Spiritual traditions speak of *practice* and underline the need to persevere rather than seeing such approaches as 'quick fixes'. Different traditions will use different words, but the idea of spiritual practice as journey can be especially helpful. Works such as *Pilgrim's Progress* build into the narrative the journey as a series of challenges and setbacks which provide a parallel interpretation of the human journey of life. Desistance encourages a mindset that honours the distance travelled rather than simple focussing on binary success or failure. Some faiths ritualise 'moving on' after setbacks, for example, through the practice of the sacrament of confession within some Christian traditions.

Corporate worship or Meditation in prison is especially important in providing an experience of a pro social community where implicit norms of behaviour are enacted — the community being marked by mutual respect and accountability. The meeting after worship/meditation for refreshments is an extension of this process — give and take, listening, support are all built up week by week and also provide a grounding for the behaviours expected from a faith community outside prison. It is important that the experience of worship inside in some ways parallels what people can expect on the outside so that if they join a faith community upon release it is in some ways familiar.

As well as religious texts, Chaplaincy can provide other inspirational but not always explicitly religious books which encourage resilience and a new sense of identity. Jo Simpson's *Touching the Void* — a book and a film — can help discussion about getting through against the odds. Similarly, the film The Way, which is based on the idea of pilgrimage, provides insights into coming to terms with loss that can be a key factor in the stories of many offenders. Even the recent best selling book *A Street Cat named Bob* can be used to provide a sense of hope and a belief that things can be different:

> Faith traditions also encourage a sense of personal responsibility . . .

> *There's a famous quote I read somewhere. It says that we are all given second chances every day of our lives. They are there for the taking, it's just that we don't usually take them.*[6]

This can help sustain motivation and give a new way of approaching each day in a positive rather than negative light. Allied with stories that inspire, that give a sense that things can be different, is inviting ex offenders who have 'made good' to come and share their stories — the ups and the downs and how they faced and overcame challenges. They can help people to see themselves as capable of change and able to write a new chapter in their story.

Seekers, Pastoral Care and Liminality

The 2011 census recorded that whilst formal religious affiliation is declining, an interest in the

6. Bowen, J (2012) *A Street Cat Named Bob* Hodder and Stoughton.

'spiritual' is increasing. This trend is likely to be reflected in the prison population. If this is combined with the experience of prison as 'liminal' and a moment where post traumatic growth can occur, then Chaplaincies need to provide opportunities for offenders to come and explore what is on offer to make sense of their experiences and offer a way forward. It can be especially valuable where humanists are part of the chaplaincy team. Including them can help some prisoners whose new sense of themselves may not involve a 'higher power' but rather a renewed sense of faith in human potential to do good and of the dignity of human being apart from any notion of transcendence.

Many chaplaincies run 'open days' where prisoners can come and ask questions and explore ideas in a non threatening and supportive environment. Such opportunities can also introduce the chaplaincy itself as a place of reflection that can be especially valuable at a time of loss or change. Recent research conducted into multifaith chaplaincy in England and Wales[7] underlines the value of the chaplaincy as a different kind of place within the prison where it was possible to think, reflect and consolidate especially when people were coming to terms with loss. Even people of no particular faith tradition find the opportunity to be quiet and light a candle, perhaps on the anniversary of death to be helpful as a way of marking time passing. Such space is also valued by staff.

You can trust the Chaplain, you know. Tell them stuff you wouldn't tell no one else.

This research into Chaplaincy also underlines the value of the pastoral care provided by Chaplains outside their statutory duties. What was distinctive in the eyes of the interviewees was that although it was recognised that Chaplains themselves frame their ministry in religious language, such care was not simply 'God talk'. Instead, the care provided had an exploratory and person centred quality to it. This provided the opportunity to make sense of events in a way that could allow new possibilities to emerge:

> *The Chaplain, you know, they help me escape prison. Not just this prison* ***but my own prison****, you know? You can trust the Chaplain, you know. Tell them stuff you wouldn't tell no one else.*[8]

A case study: The 'Belief in Change' Programme[9]

Many of the ideas discussed in this article form the basis of a faith-informed reintegration programme 'Belief in Change'. A pilot of the programme has been running at Risley. It was commissioned by NOMS, developed through the ESF grant funding and has been accredited by the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel. It is multi-faith and aimed at medium to high risk male offenders aged between 25 and 40 — although some older offenders who are part of the community have found it helpful in giving them a new way of seeing the past and planning a different future.

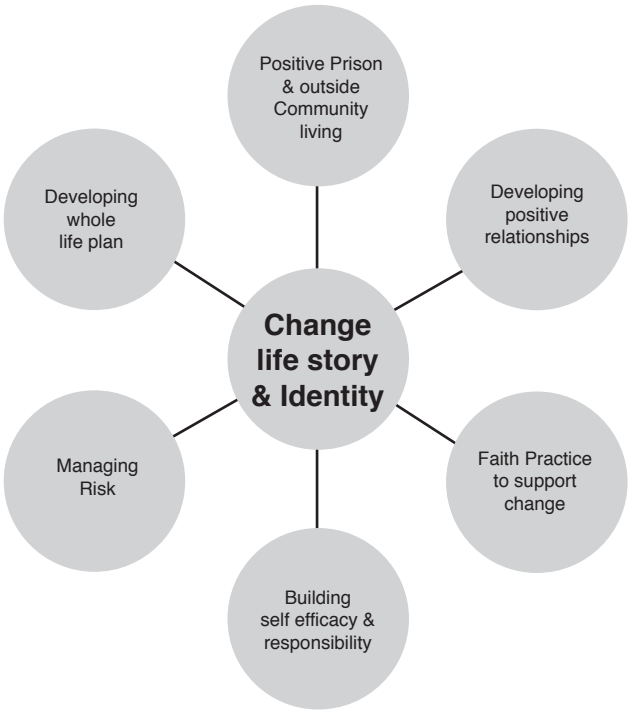
The programme is holistic and offers a range of experiences that invite offenders to change — the diagram below illustrates. It is community based, but is not a closed community, encouraging participants to try out their new skills and insights through engaging with the wider prison. It also allows participants to engage in productive activity that can be seen as reparative. The Belief in Change programme also draws on the idea of retreat found in spiritual traditions. For the duration of the programme participants in some sense 'come away' from their previous experience of prison and are encouraged to reflect personally through the keeping of a journal. They also to reflect together on what it means to be a community through morning meetings which include inspirational talks from participants or outside speakers as well as dealing with the nuts and bolts of living together.

In addition to daily community meetings there is peer support and restoration groups. These give participants and staff different ways of dealing with things that happen within the community itself and to develop new strategies for dealing with conflict or disagreement. Each participant also has 16 hours of personal coaching to develop a Life Plan in preparation for release and the support of mentors and volunteers from the outside community. Like a retreat experience, there is an explicit focus on re entry so the work and progress made during the programme is not lost through inadequate preparation for the challenges that will be faced either through re entry to another wing in the prison, moving to Cat D conditions or on release.

There are also 42 hour-long 'Lifeskill Sessions'. Many of the sessions in the six modules — Preparing to

7. Todd , A and Tipton, L (2011) The Role and Contribution of a Multifaith Chaplaincy to the Contemporary Prison Service Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies.
8. Ibid p30 quote from prisoner italics mine.
9. Bird, L, Kavanagh, M, Emmanuel, L (2010) The Belief in Change Programme Crown Copyright, National Offender Management Service.

Change; Relationships; Health and Wellbeing; Productive Living; Parenting and Family Life; and, Resources and Social Networks — are based on stories and practices introduced from across the faith and humanistic traditions to encourage reflection and the growth of resilience. Stories of people 'making good' encourage participants to see themselves both as able to change and to make a difference. This allows a new sense of narrative and the developing a new future self that complements work on the Life Plan. The programme is value based with respect and mutual support referenced throughout and so are integrative of other experiences on the programme. Another theme of the programme is the idea of legacy which is key to the idea of a changed narrative and identity. Participants are invited in various ways — choosing their inheritance tracks based on the radio 4 feature, plotting their life journey, reflecting on what their memorial might be when they die — to own their past but also to see that they have a role in shaping their future that can free them to pass on positive memories and inspiration as someone 'made good'.



'Bringing it all Together'

One of the ideas in New Ways of Working is that 'Every Contact Matters'. This is at the heart of what has motivated generations of Chaplains. As one of the 'Belief in Change' participants put it, 'Believing in Change makes Change possible.' He was saying that when people believe in him as someone capable of change, than he is more able to believe in this for himself. Chaplains and Chaplaincy Volunteers as well as other prison staff are such Believers in Change. Through spiritual practice, prisoners are able to begin to frame a new narrative to help them desist from crime. The process incorporates a variety of practical tools that help build resilience and the capacity to overcome failure as well as to celebrate success. With the added value of through-the-gate work and a supportive faith community upon release, such new narratives can be sustained and the possibility of a positive legacy becomes real.