



PRISONS WEEK 2008 STORIES

No. 1 - from the Swansea Community Chaplaincy

I was sentenced to two years imprisonment with a seven month license which meant I had to serve a total of 19 months in jail and would be released just before Christmas. I came into contact with my Community Chaplain when he was in court with another prisoner the same day as me and he saw I was depressed and needed a bit of support because of my life of crime. The only reason I committed the crime was to get back into prison, because I knew that in there I would be able to get the help and support I needed. I was addicted to heroin and wanted to get myself sorted out but couldn't find the right support on the out.

The day I was sentenced in court my Community Chaplain was there and he could clearly see the hurt, anger and, most of all, the sadness in my face. Since then he made the effort to come and see me a lot to help with supporting me and in my problems, just the support that is something someone will always need. Even when I got transferred to another prison in Wales my Community Chaplain still visited me regularly to make sure I was ok and we talked about what might happen when I got out and what I needed to plan for.

All I knew was I wanted to move away from my home town, it wasn't an easy decision to make as I'd grown up there but I had grown to hate it because of the life of crime that I'd made there and I knew I could never really go back, it wouldn't be the same and I would only have got involved in crime again and I didn't want that, so I decided to move away from it. My Community Chaplain put me in touch with a Church in the area I wanted to move to and they were really good to me. They even found me somewhere to live and paid my rent, until I found a job to start to pay them back. My Community Chaplain was a 'rock' to me and he helped me with buying food and took me out for coffee to talk about things; I could talk about anything, all the things that were good and bad since I'd been released from prison, my Community Chaplain listened and helped me to sort things out. I always relied on him, without his support I would probably be back in my home town, living my old life and getting back involved in crime and I would hate that so much.

My Community Chaplain knew about a job too and I applied for it and got it. I put him down as a reference because I knew he would be honest because he knew all the good and bad things about me and he is a Chaplain so it would look good! Now I'm looking forward to what will happen in life, everything seems new and exciting, just like it did a long time ago before I started to get into trouble. My girlfriend has moved in and we are going to get married!

I know that it is all just 'normal' to everyone else having a job, somewhere to live and getting engaged but when I was sent to prison I could never have thought I would be able to have it all, I didn't know I would be able to change things this well. And if it wasn't for my Community Chaplain always being there to talk to and tell me when I'm not thinking like I should, I would definitely not be where I am now. My future now feels really good; I never thought I could feel like this again. I've had a long 15 years of a bad life but I'm really glad I can now say it's a great life! My Community Chaplain has been the best thing to happen and he has helped me to turn my life around for the good and I hope one day I can repay him for all he's done!

Prisons week 16th-22nd Nov 2008

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Encouraging prayer for, and raising awareness of, the needs of prisoners and their families, victims of offenders, prisons staff and all those who care.