



CREATING SPACE FOR CHANGE



A SYMPOSIUM ON PRISONER REINTEGRATION

**SCOTTISH STORY TELLING CENTRE
EDINBURGH**

23 FEBRUARY 2015

Creating Space for Change

A Symposium offered by the Scottish Prison Service in collaboration with Prisoners Week

Monday 23rd February 2015, 7.00-9.00pm

Scottish Storytelling Centre
43-45 High Street
Edinburgh

Key-note Speakers and Panellists

Chair - Mr Colin McConnell, Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service

The Right Reverend John Chalmers, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Prof Fergus McNeill, Chair of Criminology and Social Work, University of Glasgow

Very Reverend Susan Macdonald, Dean of Edinburgh, representing The Most Rev David Chillingworth, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

The Reverend Brian Gowans, President of the International Catholic Commission on Prisoners Pastoral Care and representing Bishop Joseph Toal, Bishop of Motherwell.

Acknowledgements

The symposium has been organised by Reverend Bill Taylor (Chair), Reverend Brian Gowans, Mr Tom Fox and Dr Jim Carnie. The compendium of papers has been compiled and edited by Dr Jim Carnie.

A COMPENDIUM OF SYMPOSIUM PAPERS ON THE THEME 'CREATING SPACE FOR CHANGE'

Contributions in alphabetical order

Dr Jim Carnie, Head of Research and Evaluation, Scottish Prison Service

The Right Reverend John Chalmers, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

The Most Reverend David Chillingworth, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

The Reverend Sally Foster-Fulton, Convener, Church of Scotland Church & Society Council

Sheriff David Mackie, Chair of Scottish Association for the Study of Offending, Edinburgh

Mr Colin McConnell, Chief Executive, Scottish Prison Service

The Very Reverend Dr Andrew McLellan

Professor Fergus McNeill, Chair of Criminology and Social Work, University of Glasgow

Mr David Strang, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons

The Right Reverend Joseph Toal, Bishop of Motherwell

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS AND SPEAKERS

Dr Jim Carnie, Head of Research and Evaluation, Scottish Prison Service

Jim joined the Scottish Prison Service in 1995 as a Senior Research Officer and became Head of Research and Evaluation in 2008. Over the last two decades he has overseen the development of the research and evaluation function within the Service and has played a key role in providing a solid evidence base for penal policy, practice and service delivery.

Earlier in his career Jim was a Senior Research Fellow engaged in academic research on a variety of social policy and criminal justice issues at various Universities including Edinburgh, Stirling and Stockholm. He has also had spells in the NHS Information Services Division and the pre-devolution Scottish Office Central Research Unit.

Jim was educated at the University of Edinburgh where he gained MA (Hons) in Politics and PhD in Social Policy. His doctoral thesis was on Scottish morality and the politics of social reform.

The Right Reverend John Chalmers, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

John Chalmers was installed as Moderator at the General Assembly in May 2014. John is Principal Clerk to the General Assembly and was minister in Renton Trinity Parish in West Dunbartonshire and at Palmerston Place Church in the West End of Edinburgh. These contrasting parishes have given him a breadth of understanding of the challenges facing the Church.

Mr Chalmers, whose older sister June had Down's Syndrome, has spent most of his life supporting the work of Enable; for twenty years he was a member of the Board of Donaldson's, the National School for the Deaf. John and his wife Liz have three children and three grandchildren. In 2011 their younger son John-James was injured in Afghanistan while serving with the Royal Marines. Mr Chalmers says at that time they experienced the Church as a healing and supportive community. In a society in which so many people are friendless and lonely, Mr Chalmers hopes that in his role as Moderator he can encourage people to find faith, friendship and the spirit of Christ in the community of the local Church.

Referring to the challenges beyond the Church he said "The Church has to be an instrument of healing and reconciliation in post-referendum Scotland." He promised to "champion the right of the most disadvantaged both at home and abroad."

The Most Reverend David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Bishop David was born in Dublin and grew up in Northern Ireland. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin and Oriel College, Oxford. His training for ministry was at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, in the Church of England.

Ordained in Belfast in 1976, much of his working life has been spent at the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict. His work in parish ministry was consistently focused on the problems of sectarianism and the challenge of reconciliation. He also served as Church of Ireland Youth Officer from 1979-1983. Before moving to Scotland in 2005 as Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, he was for 19 years Rector of Seagoe Parish Church in Portadown and Archdeacon of Dromore.

Bishop David became Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church in 2009.

Reverend Sally Foster-Fulton, Convener, Church of Scotland Church & Society Council



Sally Foster-Fulton is Associate Minister at Dunblane Cathedral and Convener of the Church and Society Council for the Church of Scotland. The Church and Society Council is responsible for facilitating the interface between the Church of Scotland and wider civic society. It works with the government, scientific bodies, and the voluntary sector to open up debate on issues of importance to Scotland and its global neighbours. The Council is quite intentional in its focus on social justice, and uses this lens to frame its work. As its Convener, Sally is often lead spokesperson for the Church of Scotland on a wide range of social, political and ethical issues. Sally is married to Stuart and they have two daughters, Alex and Gracie. She is also the author of “Hope was Heard Singing” and has several on-line publications through the Iona community’s publishing group, Wild Goose.

The Reverend Brian Gowans, President of the International Catholic Commission on Prisoners Pastoral Care

Brian was ordained a priest in 1985 in Sheffield, serving a number of Churches in the Diocese of Hallam and appointed as Secretary-General to the Conference of Priests and Deacons of England & Wales. Moving north to St. Francis Xavier’s in Falkirk, Brian was appointed as a Chaplain to Polmont Young Offenders Institution in 1994. Currently, Brian is Parish Priest at St. Joseph’s, Burntisland, a Scottish Prison Service Chaplaincy Adviser and a Chaplain at HMP Castle Huntly.

Brian has been President of the International Catholic Commission on Prisoners Pastoral Care (ICPPC) since August 2011. This role involves Brian in extensive travel, meeting with Chaplains across the globe and often visiting people in custody where conditions are far from what would be desired. Brian has regularly attended UNODC Conferences in Vienna where he has led workshops and been a panellist on various themes including Women in Prison, Prisoners with Disabilities, Young People in Conflict with the Law,

Overcrowding, Chaplains Confronted with Torture and Freedom of Religion. Brian is co-writer of ICCPPC document 'Basic Principles - Religion in Prison'.

Sheriff David Mackie, Chair of SASO Edinburgh

David N. Mackie has been a Sheriff since 2001 and the resident Sheriff in Alloa for ten years following twenty five years in private practice as a solicitor and an Advocate. Sheriff Mackie's interest in young offenders and passionate belief in their potential to redeem themselves is partly born of his former involvement as a Board member and latterly Chair of Venture Trust for some ten years and now Chance for Change. When appropriate, he adopts an inclusive problem solving approach to some cases especially those involving young offenders. He helps with the Edinburgh branch of the Scottish association for the Study of Offending (SASO).

The Very Reverend Susan Macdonald, Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh, Scottish Episcopal Church

Born, and still at heart, a native of the Scottish Borders, Susan has always resided in Scotland apart from a year living in the USA at the tender age of 20. She has travelled widely in the UK and much further afield in various aspects of her ordained ministry.

Susan is a Scottish Episcopalian, ordained priest in 1997 and for the past 8 years has served as Rector of Christ Church Morningside in Edinburgh. In 2012 Susan was also appointed Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh and is involved in various strategic areas of the life of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Susan has a deep interest in social justice and in particular the principles and practice of restorative justice and what they might have to offer in numerous aspects of our life in Scotland.

Susan has two adult children, a son living with his wife and three children in Texas, and a daughter living in Edinburgh with her husband and two children.

Mr Colin McConnell, Chief Executive, Scottish Prison Service



Colin McConnell first joined the Scottish Prison Service in 1982 as a Prison Officer, before being selected for the fast-stream Assistant Governor Training Programme. After training, Colin served at Glenochil Prison, then as Management Development Officer at the Scottish Prison Service College. In 1992, he transferred to HM Prison Service for England and Wales, developing his qualifications and experience through a number of both operational and policy roles. In 2010, he was seconded to the Northern Ireland Prison Service as Director of Operations and appointed Director General in January 2011. Colin was appointed Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service in May 2012.

The Very Reverend Dr Andrew McLellan

Andrew McLellan was HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland from 2002 until 2009. Before that he was a parish minister in Greenock, Stirling and Edinburgh. In 2000 he was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He has been convener of three Councils of the General Assembly. He was chairman of the Religious Advisory Committee of the BBC in Scotland and a Director of Scottish Television. He is the National Chaplain of the Boys' Brigade.

Professor Fergus McNeill



Fergus McNeill is Professor of Criminology and Social Work at the University of Glasgow where he works in the [Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research](#) and is Head of Sociology. Prior to becoming an academic in 1998, Fergus worked for a number of years in residential drug rehabilitation and as a criminal justice social worker.

His many research projects and publications have examined institutions, cultures and practices of punishment and rehabilitation – and questions about their reform. Most recently, his work has focused on the policy and practice implications of research evidence about the process of desistance from offending. He recently led an ESRC funded project, '[Discovering Desistance](#)', which aims to develop the dialogue between academics, practitioners and ex-offenders about how criminal justice can better support people to leave crime behind. Currently, he is Chair of an EU funded research network on '[Offender Supervision in Europe](#)' which involves about 100 researchers from across 21 jurisdictions.

As well as researching, teaching and writing, Fergus has been involved in providing consultancy advice and support to governments and criminal justice organizations in many jurisdictions around the world. He currently serves as Chair of the Scottish Advisory Panel on Offender Rehabilitation, and is a Trustee, Council or Board Member of several criminal justice charities including [Faith in Throughcare](#), '[Positive Prisons? Positive Futures...](#)', the [Scottish Association for the Study of Offending](#) and [Vox Liminis](#).

Mr David Strang, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons

David took up post as HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland in June 2013. He is responsible for the inspection of prisons in Scotland – to examine the treatment of prisoners and the conditions in prisons. He is required to report his findings to Scottish Ministers, and to lay an Annual Report before The Scottish Parliament.

David was a Chief Officer in the police service in Scotland for 15 years. Until April 2013, he was Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police, a post he held for six years. From 2001-2007 he was Chief Constable of Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.

David has had a long involvement in the reform of criminal justice in Scotland, and was a member of The McInnes Committee Summary Justice Review (2001-2004), The Scottish Sentencing Commission (2003-2006), and The Scottish Prisons Commission (2007-2008) which produced the report “Scotland’s Choice”.

David was born and brought up in Glasgow. He obtained a BSc degree in Engineering Science from Durham University. David served in the Metropolitan Police from 1980-1998 and his final post there was as Divisional Commander at Wembley. In 1989 he obtained an MSc degree in Organisational Behaviour from Birkbeck College, University of London. He was awarded the Queen’s Police Medal in 2002.

David is currently the Chair of the Scottish Association for the Study of Offending (SASO).

The Right Reverend Joseph Toal, Bishop of Motherwell

Bishop Joseph Toal is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Motherwell, having moved to that Diocese from Argyll and the Isles in June 2014. Bishop Toal has been a bishop since 2008, having been ordained a priest of his native Diocese of Argyll and the Isles Diocese in 1980. Bishop Toal served as a Parish Priest in South Uist, Campbeltown and Benbecula and also spent some years on the staff of the Royal Scots College in Salamanca, Spain. Bishop Toal has overall responsibility for the “Caritas Department” in the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland, which means taking an interest in and offering leadership in matters of social care both at home and abroad. Overseeing those involved in prison ministry on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church falls therefore within his responsibilities and Bishop Toal acknowledges the good work being done by all who offer spiritual and pastoral care within the prison system.

INTRODUCTION

Creating Space for Change – A Symposium

This Symposium recognises the benefits of partnership working and has at its core the aspiration of shared journeys, where at points along the way to a safer society, prisons and communities work together, in mutual support of those of our citizens who are, or have been, in custodial care. Transformational change is happening within prisons as the Scottish Prison Service aspires to affirm assets and enable individuals to realise their potential.

We recognise that people can change and we wish to support them by changing the prison environment - its culture and ethos - into a place of learning, person-centred care and opportunity. We want to take this debate to our communities and to assert that we need a society which accepts that people have changed and helps them to live out that change when they return from prison into our communities.

The question of ‘how we create space for change’ invites us to reflect on what might be needed to support communities in integrating citizens returning to them. In terms that may or may not be religious, the question that arises is ‘how do we as a society forgive one another?’ We wonder what contribution the Faith Communities, those of a secular humanist perspective and those from academia might make to these issues. We believe the issue to be consistent with the goals of making Scotland a safer and better place with fewer people becoming victims of crime.

In the opening article, **Jim Carnie** points to the structural links between social exclusion and imprisonment in Scotland. Research has shown that half of the prisoner population lived in just 155 of the 1222 local government wards in Scotland. The problem to be addressed is not only the deficits of the offender, but also the marginalisation of the communities from which they come. Accordingly, criminal justice interventions aimed at decreasing levels of offending behaviour need to be focused on reducing offenders’ links with people, places and networks associated with their offending, while also building cultural and ‘social capital’ through positive bonding and relationships.

Instilling basic social and life skills and establishing meaningful links with a range of community services that offer support need to be combined with encouraging individuals to develop the necessary resilience to cope with the demands in the outside world. The traditional model of institutional incarceration demands obedience on the part of the prisoner, in return for benevolence on the part of staff. To assist those in custody to nurture their personal narratives with a more fully developed set of social and cultural skills for living requires not only change in them, but also changes in the disposition of staff and managers of prisons and community support agencies alike.

Those in custody need to be given opportunities to both receive and give respect. Re-integration necessitates a ‘de-labelling process’ in which positive change in a person’s behaviour is recognised and acknowledged.

John Chalmers writes that ‘creating space for change’ are all biblical words which offer vision, mission and meaning for life. He points to a number of parables in the bible - the Prodigal Son, the Samaritan, Zacchaeus - which demonstrate the value and worth of forgiveness. The challenge to the church and Christians is that they must not pass by on the other side, but be counted and be involved with our neighbour.

Examples of church involvement include Crossreach, the largest voluntary social care organisation in Scotland, support of Chaplaincy in prisons and elsewhere, work in developing and running prison visitor centres, and the work of the Guild. Creating space for change should begin by recognising and highlighting the context of criminality. Poverty and inequality are the starting points of any assessment of crime in society.

Anyone or any organisation which seeks to address the needs of the offender is frequently portrayed as being anti-victim. Creating space for change gives us another opportunity to reflect and find another way forward. Preventing the next victim has never resonated the way it could or should have. Working together is the way in which space for change will be created.

David Chillingworth’s first reflection is that for Christians, the care of those in prison is a pastoral imperative. He describes his long involvement in prisons in Northern Ireland and Scotland and reflects on his discomfort that in Scotland we still hold some 7,500 prisoners in custody. This not only affects the incarcerated individuals, but also impacts on families, children, marriages and jobs.

His wider reflection is that, while prison staff and chaplains are deeply committed to rehabilitation, as a society we still seem to be over-reliant on custodial sentences as our response to crime. We are starting to do more - Community Service and Restorative Justice programmes for example - but we seem to be locked into a political discourse which has little real discussion of whether it makes sense to give large numbers of offenders custodial sentences.

It is inevitable therefore that people of faith will be deeply interested in responses to offending which prioritise relationships and which address the matter not just in terms of payment for wrong done, but in terms of forgiveness, healing and a new start. The argument is made for ‘joined up’ thinking if we are not just to ‘create the space’, but to encourage ex-prisoners to occupy it. Concrete suggestions to achieve that goal are outlined.

Sally Foster-Fulton poses three fundamental questions that each of us as individual human beings ask ourselves at some point in our life journey. “Who am I? Where do I fit into this ever-expanding landscape? What part will I play in the community that has begun to unfurl as I find my feet?” The answers we find and the lessons taught us, intentional or otherwise, frame who we become. She asks in the context of community justice “how can communities create a space for returning citizens to live out the

changes they have started in prison?” Where do we begin? How do we create this ‘space for change’?

Society needs to be as attuned to social justice as it is to criminal justice – the two cannot be separated. Our prison population is still problematically high. Society must be brave enough to redress systems that keep people in poverty and promulgate a vastly unequal society.

If the vision and commitment of the SPS is to bear fruit, then the society to which prisoners return has to show a belief in them. There needs to be community-wide welcome and a systemic commitment to change. Faith communities are perfectly placed to step up and help out and provide individuals to walk a difficult road with those coming home.

David Mackie advocates a problem solving approach to crime reduction and cites the introduction of drug treatment and testing orders (‘DTTO’) in the late 1990s as an example. The concept was that if a person’s offending was directly linked to a problem of drug addiction, then by addressing the drug problem the crime could also be addressed. Regular reviews before the same Sheriff over a two year period allow the formation of a relationship with feelings of responsibility and accountability promoted in the offender.

The DTTO is one sentencing tool which has enabled sentencers to refrain from perpetuating a repetitive cycle of short and ineffectual custodial sentences; the so-called revolving door. It is widely acknowledged that such a problem solving approach has a wider application in relation to other forms of offending – especially with female offenders and young offenders. Offenders, especially young people, need space to change and sometimes that space is inside themselves. All involved in the criminal justice system have the opportunity to create the space for change by helping individuals to that personal realisation of a better way of living and a personal desire for change.

Colin McConnell argues that we need to encourage the community to be receptive to, and supportive of, those returning home after a period in custody to resume their daily lives. This is not only about how we put in place appropriate post-release administrative structures, mechanisms and processes, but, equally importantly, how we create the ‘moral space’ for returning citizens to consolidate, re-inforce and live the positive changes they have started to embrace while serving their sentence and repaying their debt to society.

A key challenge is changing popular perceptions and moral stance on ex-offenders. Twenty-first century Scottish society still avails itself of every opportunity to label and stigmatise the ‘offender’, the ‘criminal’, the ‘convict’, the ‘prisoner’. The popular image of the prisoner presented in the Scottish tabloid press is both sensationalist and retributive. Offenders are rarely seen as individuals requiring positive guidance and assistance to re-integrate into the community; accorded any degree of respect; or offered much by way of forgiveness.

There are opportunities to approach things differently in Scotland, to think laterally about imaginative solutions and to put Scotland on the map as a world leader in penal thinking. Initiatives such as the Throughcare Support Officer show the way ahead, grounded in an asset-based approach, involving forgiveness and a personal 'redemption script' to promote desistance. We need to think imaginatively about the moral, social, political, economic and physical 'space for change' and consider these issues rationally.

Andrew McLellan is alarmed that the debate on imprisonment does not appear to have moved on much in recent years. He is discomfited to realise that most people are uninterested in prisons, prisoners, prison staff, families and victims. There is little meaningful public discussion, so the same people keep saying the same things in the same arenas. If citizens are to live out the changes they have started to make in prisons after they leave, the communities to which they return need to understand far better than they currently do what prison can and cannot accomplish.

He cites three ill-informed, but oft-repeated comments. "Prison: it's a holiday camp." "If you can't do the time don't do the crime". "Because you care about prisoners it's obvious you don't care about victims".

If the rest of us do not understand that leaving prison can be terrifying, if we do not understand how fragile people can be when they leave prison, then we will never create space for change. If we think prisoners are nothing to do with us and it is all their own fault, we will do nothing to change lives and we will do nothing to reduce criminality. Creating space for change needs a very different attitude.

Fergus McNeill takes us into outer space and the concept of re-entry. It is the term used for space-craft returning to the Earth's atmosphere. To survive re-entry, such craft need skilful navigation, technologically innovative design and engineering and a soft landing place. In criminal justice, the USA is an example of a society coming to terms with the social consequences of its ill-fated experiment with mass incarceration; hence the terminology of 'prisoner re-entry'. In this respect, the metaphor is helpful in that it shows the importance and costs of investing in a safe return.

However, imprisonment deliberately inflicts disconnection; a form of banishment that creates its own problems of safe return. These are problems as much for the excluding society as for the individuals and families directly involved. The expelling society is also the receiving society.

Two ways are suggested to bridge the gap between the 'self' and the 'other' - between 'them' and 'us'. One is to unsettle the distinction. 'Respectable' people need to be challenged to consider aspects of their own lives which may not be entirely lawful - to reflect on offences they may have committed, but for which they have never faced sanction. This would unsettle assumptions about our non-offending 'selves'. A second, related approach is to support and share narratives that unsettle 'our' assumptions

about the offending 'other'. We face a choice between making and sharing stories that divide us or we can make and share stories that unite us.

David Strang contends that supporting people to make the transition from prison to the community should be central to our criminal justice system and our society. What all prisoners have in common is being sentenced by the court to a period of custody as a result of their offending behaviour. Prison is a visible sign of offenders' exclusion from mainstream society, their punishment being the deprivation of their liberty.

Prisoners face a number of practical needs in re-integrating into the community, such as the need for housing, employment, education, training, healthcare, addictions support and money. These essential elements of life in the community can be doubly difficult for those just leaving prison. To address this Throughcare Support Officers are being rolled out across the SPS estate to support the re-entry transition and collaborative working is being consolidated between the prison service and statutory and voluntary agencies in the community.

A significant barrier to successful reintegration lies in attitudes to people who have offended and perceptions of their potential. People leaving prison are often labelled by the crimes or offences they have committed - making a fresh start can be blocked before it can even take root. Further, many people in prison lose a sense of hope that their futures could be better. There is a real need to encourage prisoners not just to look back to what they have done, but more importantly to look forward positively to what is possible. Rather than being defined by their past offending, people need support in identifying their real strengths, skills, talents and potential.

Joseph Toal identifies a danger that while in prison people can become 'institutionalised', static and less motivated to seek a better way of living. Those seeking rehabilitation must overcome this possible paralysis and be willing to begin a journey. From the Christian perspective, an awareness of God's love makes it possible to begin this journey and to find hope in the possibility of a renewed way of living. Reference is made to Pope Francis' statement on the need of every human person for rehabilitation and conversion to God - "to walk the way of rehabilitation, this is something we all need to do - All."

The great challenge for all involved in supporting change is to help those in prison move on from their past transgressions. The Church can assist in promoting a system of justice that is both humanising and reconciliatory; justice that leads the wrongdoer through a path of reflection and education to rehabilitation and the possibility of full reinsertion into their family and local community.

However, the opportunities available to those released from prison and the reception afforded them by the community to which they return plays a crucial part in making rehabilitation possible. Positive opportunities may not always be easy to achieve as negative and suspicious attitudes towards offenders do persist. In Christian terms, the possibility of redemption and a new beginning is at the heart of the Gospel and should

inspire the work done to bring those in prison to seek change and a virtuous way of life. It is especially important to promote awareness that positive change is possible.

Jim Carnie

Creating Space for Change

**“Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose”
(Lyndon B. Johnson)**

The SPS Organisational Review, “Unlocking Potential - Transforming Lives”, provides an ambitious and challenging vision for transformational change in the management of people in custody and beyond into the community. It recognises that ultimately the decisions that prisoners make will determine their future path, but that crucially, a broad range of professionals can help inform those decisions, identify individual strengths, circumstances and vulnerabilities and provide the necessary personalised guidance and support for them to build and sustain a positive and crime free lifestyle.

Evidence suggests that the onset of criminal offending is associated with family dysfunction, poor educational attainment, school exclusion, lack of employment opportunities, the presence of negative peer influences and socio-economic deprivation. A number of studies have demonstrated the structural links between social exclusion and imprisonment in Scotland. Research in 2005 found that 28% of the prisoner population came from the most deprived areas, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), in comparison to 10% of the general population.¹ Similarly, half of the prisoner population lived in just 155 of the 1222 local government wards in Scotland.

Another study in 2010 confirmed imprisonment rates varied considerably across the country. The research found previous prisoner residence by local authority showed Glasgow to have the highest imprisonment rate at just under 340 people per 100,000 population in contrast to Orkney with a rate of less than 30.² These studies highlighted the problem to be addressed was not only the deficits of the offender, but also the marginalisation of the communities from which they came.

Accordingly, it is recognised that criminal justice interventions aimed at decreasing levels of offending behaviour need to be focused on reducing offenders’ links with situations, people, places and networks correlated with their offending, while also building cultural and ‘social capital’ through positive bonding and relationships.

Research on throughcare demonstrates the need to focus on a range of individual needs with integrated support both in the prison and in the community. Processes for successful rehabilitation and re-integration include teaching basic social and life skills; helping people to develop the capacity to cope with their needs in the outside world;

¹ Houchin, R. Social Exclusion and Imprisonment in Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University, 2005

² McPhee, D. Identifying Area Need Using Justice and Unemployment Data, Communities Analytical Services, Scottish Government, 2010

establishing meaningful links with a range of community services that can offer continuing support; and supporting psychological wellbeing.

To that list there are three further indispensable components: respect; responsibility; and redemption (in its 'desistance sense'). Respect and responsibility are not abstract or disembodied concepts. Respect and responsibility to people in custody are based on an idea of being given a fair chance. Desistance from crime requires a choice, but the choice and decision to take on responsibly is a socially and culturally mediated event.

This position is influenced by Halsey's contention that when people in custody are denied opportunities for engaging and practising the 'performance of respect' and denied opportunities to care for self and others in meaningful ways, the process of desisting from crime is compromised. Performance of respect means both the giving and receiving of respect.

The traditional model of institutional incarceration demands obedience on the part of the prisoner, in return for benevolence on the part of staff. To assist those in custody to nourish and nurture their personal narratives with a more fully developed set of social and cultural skills for living requires not only change in them, but also changes in the disposition of staff and managers of prisons and community support agencies alike. Implementing the changes envisaged in "Unlocking Potential – Transforming Lives", will only be possible with the commitment, skills and compassion of staff working daily to support people gain the confidence, skills and agency to lead productive and worthy lives in the community.

Working with their personal officer, those in custody need to have the opportunity to shape their own individual plan which articulates clear outcomes in health, wellbeing, learning and personal development. It is a prerequisite that those in custody are involved in organising their own destiny. We cannot live their lives for them; but we can give them skills and responsibility to face up to the challenges that inevitably await. Involving people in key decisions about their aspirations in the community is essential to nurture responsibility and decision making and promote positive links with family, community and employers.

Yet, recent research into long term prisoners in Scottish prisons found:

*"The men felt that they were treated as an aggregate rather than as individuals with individual needs and that this meant the necessary supports upon release were often not put in place... It is important that those who are released have better chances to secure an alternative identity for themselves so that they can move into a new stage of their lives, rather than withdrawing from the world in order to desist."*³

³ Schinkel, M. Long term prisoners' accounts of their sentence, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh, 2013

The fundamental task of SPS ought to be to help move those people in custodial care along a continuum from ‘just doing time’ through personal turning points and onto a positive future. Both prison and community agency staff need to assist those on the journey acquire the ability to cope, achieve health and well-being and embrace a positive outlook in relation to family stability, employment opportunities and pro-social citizenship. As Sir Harry Burns would express it, we need to empower the people with the problems to become the solution.

However, the process of being released from custody is not necessarily a time of unrestrained optimism; both incarceration and release have been shown to be fraught with social, economic, familial and existential uncertainties. Threats to self-esteem often characterise attempts to rejoin the community following extended periods in custody. The giving and receiving of respect and responsibility are central to the development of the fundamental skills required by people in custody to negotiate their re-integration pathway with confidence.

To quote from his essay on desistance, Halsey states:

*“Starting again – attempting to make good – requires not only that each would be desister begins to conceive of themselves and their relationship to the world in new ways. More than this, it requires other people (police, release workers, family members, peers, teachers) grant the space and time for change to occur, and to believe that it can so occur.”*⁴

Those in custody need to be encouraged to conceive of life as a collective project – as a journey necessarily involving reliance upon other persons and resources. Understanding that the ‘returning citizen’ is part of a wider social construct is critical to the negotiation of the transition from custody to community and for maximising the potential for desistance to be sustained. Desistance involves redefining the relationship between the ‘returning citizen’ and a community intent on attaching a label – ‘ex-offender’. Re-integration necessitates a ‘de-labelling process’ in which positive change in a person’s behaviour is recognised and acknowledged.

Halsey rightly argues:

*“To expect people whose lives have been characterised by the structural inability to assume responsibility for non-trivial relationships and events for extended periods to suddenly turn this situation on its head overnight because they are now formally free to do so, surely rates as one of the most bizarre and unrealistic social experiments in penal practice. Learning to be responsible, just like learning to do crime, takes time. It takes practice and, just as critically, it requires a willingness on behalf of so-called mainstream networks to place their trust in persons afflicted by severely depleted levels of social and symbolic capital.”*⁵

⁴ Halsey, M. Risking desistance: respect and responsibility in custodial and post release contexts, in *Imaginary Penalties*, Carlen P. (ed.), Cullompton, Willan, 2008

⁵ Ibid.

So, to end on a quote from Ernest Hemingway – “the best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them”.

John Chalmers

Creating Space for Change

The title is certainly an inspirational challenge – words which point to room for debate, analysis and opportunity. All are biblical words which offer vision, mission and meaning for life. The writer of Proverbs reminded us ‘where there is no vision, the people will perish’. This is a necessary starting place for any organisation, or any society. It is to the credit of SPS that it has invested considerable time and resources in revisiting and updating its vision. Its new strapline of ‘unlocking potential, transforming lives’ represents a significant change for the service, a strapline which deserves to succeed and to gain public acceptance.

Change is a constant fact of life, but as people, as communities, as societies we often prefer to postpone change or resist it. In Jesus’ parable known as the Prodigal Son, the son appears as a thoughtless, fun loving playboy, until his money runs out; with his life in a mess, he finds space to change and goes back humbly to seek forgiveness from his father which indeed he received. Real, personal change is always possible; Christians are people who believe in personal redemption.

Zacchaeus too, despised as a fraudster complicit with the Romans, found in his meeting with Jesus space for change. Another parable sees a Samaritan support a victim of a robbery. Prior to the Samaritan arriving on the scene the Levite and the priest had passed by on the other side, not wanting to know. This parable was the answer of Jesus to the question ‘who is our neighbour?’ This is the challenge to the church and Christians everywhere: we must not pass by on the other side but stand up, be counted and be involved with our neighbour.

Examples of our own involvement as a church include Crossreach, the largest voluntary social care organisation in Scotland, our support of Chaplaincy in prisons and elsewhere, our work in developing and running prison visitor centres, and the work of the Guild. Creating space for change should begin by recognising and highlighting the context of criminality. Poverty and inequality are the starting points of any assessment of crime in any society. It is no coincidence that the societies with the biggest gap in wealth have the biggest prisoner populations.

Creating space for change suggests a need for action. What can the churches offer today? We greatly welcome the various SPS initiatives supporting prisoners on release. In particular rolling out the Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) scheme is a massive but welcome commitment on the part of the SPS. Chaplains also support prisoners on release: occasionally the support is direct, more often indirect through arranging a particular link with a church or faith based voluntary organisation. Faith in Throughcare has developed a model for working with chaplains and local communities to support prisoners on release; does this partnership have potential for development with the new TSOs?

Creating space for change invites fresh thinking about 'space'. Through our national structure and the numerous buildings the Church of Scotland does have physical space potentially to offer. We have many hall buildings which are community resources and often in great demand and open throughout the week. One example is the hall of the local church being used as a temporary visitors' centre for Barlinnie. There is much discussion about having a one stop shop to support prisoners on release. The Faith in Throughcare model uses church resources of people and buildings to deliver support.

Expanding this would be a significant challenge to us but an idea well worth pursuing if found to be useful. Such a church building would be central, neutral, not having any baggage associated with it, and well resourced. The next step then would be deciding what could be provided in such a church building. Clearly it could be a suitable mutually acceptable location for all the relevant agencies seeking actively to replicate the now well-established links in centres operating in every prison. It could also be a simple source of personal interest and support linked to providing activity or even just contact. Society has not caught up with the ageing of the prisoner population. Linked to that many prisoners are in poor health and, being realistic, will be unable to hold down full time employment. There is scope here for new thinking and new partnerships at a very local level which could in turn meet local needs, thereby creating an inclusive community based on mutual support.

With regard to creating space immediately outside the prison, work between the SPS and the Church of Scotland is well underway. Along with Families Outside, the Salvation Army, Crossreach and other partners a promising structure is emerging with innovative solutions with the aim of providing support for visitors in every Scottish prison. Our most recent example is at Polmont. Visitor Centres and Help Hubs have enormous potential and the commitment of Scottish Government as well as the SPS is greatly valued here. Space can be created to maximise visible and tangible support for prisoners' families thereby sending out a message that 'we care' which is a message families otherwise do not receive. Indeed, sadly it is often the exact opposite.

A great sadness of the contemporary crime and punishment debate is how it is portrayed as victim versus offender. Anyone or any organisation which seeks to address the needs of the offender is frequently portrayed as being anti-victim. Creating space for change gives us another opportunity to reflect here and find another way forward. Preventing the next victim has never resonated the way it could or should have. The pioneering work of the Edinburgh Transitions Project demonstrated that from an early age the close links between being a victim and becoming an offender are complex. Victims often want knowledge and understanding, not necessarily revenge and retaliation. Victim impact statements are giving victims more of a role in the criminal justice system. Information pre-release schemes have been around for some time. Restorative justice has been viewed with suspicion by many victims which is a matter of great regret. The church here has to promote and embody much more actively its message of forgiveness and redemption. There is more for us to do here, as always.

In the last half century when law and order has become such a political and politicised issue, the fear of crime has become increasingly part of this discourse. In response we now have made our home into a mini Fort Knox and our streets and open spaces are covered by CCTV. These developments raise many concerns not least their effectiveness in reducing or deterring crime. However, the underlying message is that fear is endemic. How can we create space for change by revisiting how we relate to each other and in the process demonstrate mutual trust and goodwill rather than anxiety and trepidation? We should not be slow in talking up the positives in our society and not simply concentrating on the negatives - in the case of crime the reality is that very few of us are victims and this fact needs to be reinforced at every opportunity. In addition recorded crime is falling and has been for a number of years. There are exceptions and caveats but the trend is clear and it is downward.

At the onset of the economic crisis many predicted that crimes involving dishonesty would increase dramatically. This has not happened; indeed, as indicated, the opposite is the case; what has occurred is the creation of food banks. Many people have created space in terms of their diary by giving of their time. Many more have donated goods on a generous and sustained basis. While the need for food banks is a truly sad commentary on the state of our society the efforts of the churches and other voluntary organisations should be highly commended. Here is an example where individuals have created space for change with beneficial results.

The Church of Scotland is very pleased to be invited to participate in this symposium. As indicated with our national structure, Crossreach, the Guild and our Church and Society Council, we have a voice which is being heard up and down the country and in all the places where decisions are taken that affect us today and tomorrow. Creating space for change is indeed an inspiring theme which will resonate within the church as well as within criminal justice agencies. We have no difficulty in promoting the good news of changed lives and changed structures as having powerful and meaningful significance today. Our task is to be seen to practice our faith in today's ever-changing and in some ways more secular society. We can do no better than continue to 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly' and by doing this we will be working ever more closely with our partners to create a vibrant, caring Scotland where crime plays a smaller and smaller role and where we can support victims and offenders with compassion and sensitivity. Working together is the way in which we will create space for change.

David Chillingworth

Creating Space for Change

I'm very grateful that you have invited churches and church leaders to contribute to this Symposium. I'm sorry that I can't be here in person - but grateful to Very Revd. Susan Macdonald for presenting my contribution to you.

I understand your intention as being to explore with faith communities - among a number of other communities - how we can help to 'create the space for returning citizens to live out the changes they have started to make in prison'. That is a challenge for us - and a welcome one - and I shall offer some specific suggestions later in this paper.

You also suggest that we might include some brief personal reflections on the topic. I'm happy to do that - because simply to respond to your 'how do we create the space' question might be seen as suggesting that faith communities are unquestioningly supportive of the present models by which our society deals with the complex issues of crime and punishment and with the aspiration to rehabilitate offenders. Speaking personally, that is not the case.

My first reflection is to say that for Christians, the care of those in prison is what we might call a pastoral imperative. Jesus challenges his disciples - in St Matthew's Gospel he says, 'I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' The question is whether we can see in the face of the prisoner the face of Jesus Christ. That is the sacredness of ministry among those in prison.

I have a long history of contact with the prison service. In my former life in Northern Ireland, I had the disturbing experience of visiting the Maze Prison when it was still Long Kesh Internment Camp. In the early 1980's, I was a member of the Board of Visitors at Crumlin Road Prison in Belfast when it was a Remand Prison.

My contact has continued - most recently when I visited Perth Prison during Prisoners Week. That visit confirmed me in two apparently irreconcilable views about what I saw and encountered. First of all, I saw an institution which is determined to be so far as is possible humane, compassionate and dedicated to helping prisoners to establish better lives when they return to society - and certainly to do everything possible to ensure that they do not return to prison. Yet, it still comes as an uncomfortable surprise to find out how many people are in prison in Scotland at any one time - on December 26th the total in Scotland was 7450. Former Inspector of Prisons, Very Revd. Andrew McLellan has over the years done a fine job in reminding us of what that means in reality - the number of parents of young children, the number from troubled backgrounds, and so on. Beyond that, there will be the extent to which the marriages of prisoners come under pressure and the loss of jobs and settled patterns of life which a prison sentence brings.

So my wider reflection is that, while prison staff and chaplains are deeply committed to rehabilitation, as a society we still seem to be over-reliant on custodial sentences as our response to crime. We are starting to do more - Community Service and Restorative Justice programmes for example - but we seem to be locked into a political discourse which has little real discussion of whether it makes sense to give large numbers of offenders custodial sentences.

For Christians, these questions are more than matters of political interest. They are central to how our faith is applied in daily living. Peter asks Jesus, 'How often should I forgive my brother when he sins against me?' It seems to me that Jesus' answer to that question, 'Seventy times seven' places forgiveness and the healing which flows from forgiveness as almost the central and most creative element in all human relationships. I learned in my past involvement with victims of violence that that was true. It is no less true as a response to the hurt and injury which we do to one another in our fragile and breaking patterns of relationship and family life.

Christians are determined to live lives characterised by hope. In our faith, rehabilitation is inextricably linked to forgiveness and redemption is the work of God in drawing good out of evil. It is inevitable therefore, that people of faith will be deeply interested in responses to offending which prioritise relationships and which address the matter not just in terms of payment for wrong done, but in terms of forgiveness, healing and a new start.

I hope that those reflections may give rise to wider exploration. For now, I shall return to the specific question which you put to us.

I think that most churches and local congregations would want to give an unhesitating 'Yes' in answer to the question, 'Do you want to play a part in creating space for those who leave prison as they live out the changes they have started to make?' But I think that many churches will need some help and support in doing that. Times have not been easy for churches in recent years. People look around their congregation and will tend to say, 'Too few and too grey.' In short, congregations are no longer a cross-section of the whole of our society in age, gender balance, economic and educational background and so on. But I believe that better times are coming. In our church, we are beginning to see a new generation of clergy leadership which will help congregations to engage creatively with society and its issues. Less formal patterns of meeting and worship will make it easier to find a 'way in'. Church communities remain places to be prized and valued. In a society which tends to express atomised individualism, churches are one of the few places in which it is possible to become part of a diverse and accepting community. That is precisely the potential which they offer for those who return to life in society.

But this is going to require holistic thinking and hard work. Former prisoners will not find their way into church communities by accident.

A Prison Chaplain reminded me of her work in a 'Community Facing' jail - where chaplains have the opportunity to engage with ex-prisoners for a brief period of time after liberation, particularly in their vulnerable first few weeks.

I think that we need some 'joined up' thinking if we are not just to 'create the space' but to encourage ex-prisoners to occupy it. For example:

- it would be very helpful if Chaplains and other Prison Staff could run a programme of training which would prepare churches and their leaders to share in this important work;
- it would make sense to begin the contact between prisoners and local churches before their release - and thereby complement the work of Chaplains which is done after release;
- it would be helpful if we could together shape an identifiable and lightly branded programme which allowed a church to 'signal' their involvement in this work and their openness to ex-prisoners;
- churches would value some exploration of the kind of programmes which would be helpful - that is as likely to be continuing training in cooking and household management from a volunteer group to a chance to look at some of the issues of forgiveness and healing which I identified above.

In conclusion, I would like to say again how encouraging it is that you have taken this initiative. I hope that it is the beginning of a positive and fruitful co-operation between us and other groups in our community.

Sally Foster-Fulton

Creating Space for Change

One hundred trillion cells, seven million years of evolution, forty weeks gestation, years of love and lessons and laughter - tears too no doubt have gone into our human-being. The creative imagination of the divine is reflected in every face - the spirit of God is in every first and last and in-between breath we take.

Each person - a one-off, never-to-be-repeated-ever creation, loved by God and of infinite value, and we begin from that sacred source. But, human beings are evolutionary creatures – as bodies grow and stretch and unfold, so do minds and spirits and a permeating sense of self.

- Who am I?
- Where do I fit into this ever-expanding landscape?
- What part will I play in the community that has begun to unfurl as I find my feet?

These are questions that come to every single one of us, and the answers we find and the lessons taught us, intentional or otherwise, frame who we become. Being human is not static, but a breath-taking evolution – a journey that begins when (or even before) we draw our first breath and continues until our last. Being human is a becoming.

So what do we do when becoming has come apart, when the lessons that have been learned, intentional or otherwise, have caused an individual to become disenfranchised?

So what do we do as a community to help them find a way back to themselves and to us?

In the context of community justice and the question posed in this symposium, “how can communities create a space for returning citizens to live out the changes they have started in prison?” Where do we begin? How do we create this ‘space for change’?

I am ever more convinced that we have to begin at the beginning. If life is an evolution, a continuum of lessons learned, intentionally taught or absorbed through experience, then society has to be as attuned to social justice as it is to criminal justice – the two cannot be separated.

Justice: when we unpack that too-often clichéd word, what do we mean? And who is it for and who comes first on the list or in the queue when we hand it out? And can it ever be separated from mercy and stand a chance at surviving?

Of course it is imperative that our criminal justice system and our prison service continue to focus work on keeping communities safe and free from harm. It is encouraging to note that crime in Scotland is at a generational low – that we are “bucking a trend” – sadly, other European neighbours are not experiencing the same level of decrease overall; however, our prison population is still problematically high and our recidivism

rates a continuing concern. Once incarcerated, it seems many have entered a revolving door rather than throughway to a different or better life post-prison.

So, while we work on ways to bring justice to the victims of crime in society, society also must be brave enough to redress the broken systems set in stone that keep people in poverty, that maintain a vastly unequal society where too many have too little and a minority have more than they know what to do with. Inequality has been shown over and over again to be a blight on communities as a whole; keeping “the haves” hidden behind walls to keep their bubble floating - they run on a treadmill that never stops because there is always something else to “get”; while those who struggle, too often find themselves in a vicious cycle of low-pay, zero hours contracts, unstable, unpredictable work and unemployment – they cannot break through a seemingly unbreakable glass ceiling. And, sometimes, they end up behind stone walls and iron bars.

I live and work in Stirlingshire- my home is a stone’s throw away from Cornton Vale women's prison and Glen Ochil – they’re practically on my doorstep but a world away. I have two daughters 23 and 20 -beautiful young women, but so young! In Cornton Vale there are inmates younger than my youngest - what did they do to get themselves there - lots of things. Do they deserve to be there? I know what they didn't deserve- they didn't deserve to be born into poverty, but statistically speaking almost all of them were - structural injustice that put them at least ten steps back from the starting line while they were still in their prams. And they didn't deserve to be introduced to drugs and alcohol before they were in their teens - and statistically speaking almost all of them were. And they didn't deserve to be the victims of violence by men they trusted or depended on - and almost all of them were. And the statistics are similar in every prison in Scotland. Alcohol addiction or excessive use is reported at up 80%, drug addiction and misuse at 60%. With struggles in early years, broken homes and a history of being in care – most in prison having failed to succeed in the educational system. People do not just appear in our prisons, there is a similar history that does not just indict them.

This is not an excusing of criminal behaviour, but a call to us all in Scotland to play our part to narrow the gap – too many people fall into the cracks it creates. Social justice must be a prerequisite to criminal justice.

The Scottish Prison Service has begun a transformation that we in society should not only applaud and support, but mirror and echo.

Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service, Colin McConnell, said in a speech earlier last year that the SPS was not only going to “up its game” but “change its game – to provide services that helped to transform the lives of people in their care so they could fulfil their potential and become responsible citizens.” He said further: “those with whom we work are individuals who need to be regarded, respected and understood for who they are and what they could become.” Each person - a one-off, never-to-be-repeated-ever creation, loved by God and of infinite value, and we begin from that sacred source. To repeat, human beings are evolutionary creatures – as bodies grow and stretch and unfold, so do minds and spirits and a permeating sense of self.

- Who am I?
- Where do I fit into this ever-expanding landscape?
- What part will I play in the community that has begun to unfurl as I find my feet?

If the vision and commitment of the SPS is to bear fruit, then the society these individuals live in and come back to has to embrace the same belief in them. There needs to be community-wide welcome, systemic commitment to change and individuals there to walk a difficult road with those coming home. Faith communities are perfectly placed to step up and help out. We have committed people, strategically located buildings and a call to care for those who find themselves on the margins for whatever reason. This call is not about a bringing people to faith, but a faith in them as beloved, one-off, never-to-be-repeated creations, loved by God and of infinite value, and we begin from that sacred source.

David Mackie

Creating Space for Change

There is a simple but, I do not think simplistic, proposition underlying the notion of problem solving justice that if you solve the problem you solve the crime. The problem solving approach to crime was first exemplified in Scotland with the introduction 15 years ago of the drug treatment and testing order ('DTTO') in September 1998⁶. The concept was that if a person's offending was directly linked to a problem of drug addiction then by addressing the drug problem the crime would also be addressed. A key element to such orders which typically last two years is the regular, commonly monthly, review by the Sheriff. The research and practice, mainly in the USA, which preceded the introduction of DTTO's in Scotland disclosed that the direct contact between the offender and the sentencing judge contributed significantly to the offenders' commitment and adherence to the order and a reduction in the likelihood of recidivism. An important component is the commitment of the offender and proof of a desire to effect change in their life. The rigorous assessment process usually weeds out those who lack the commitment and risk being set up to fail. Those offenders who pass the assessment and are placed on an order are, in effect, being offered an opportunity to effect the changes in their lives which will at least set them on the road to addressing the blight of drug addiction and distancing them from a lifestyle which led them into the criminal justice system early in their lives. To some the notion of a relationship between the sentencing judge and the offender may seem unlikely but the consequence of regular reviews before the same Sheriff over a two year period is the formation of a relationship with feelings of responsibility and accountability in the offender, a desire not to let the Sheriff down. Another important by-product is the discipline for the supervising Social Worker and Drug Workers to produce regular reports for the Court and a matching desire to report progress.

The DTTO is one sentencing tool which has enabled the criminal justice system, sentencing Sheriffs and Judges in particular, to refrain from perpetuating a repetitive cycle of short and ineffectual custodial sentences; the so-called revolving door. It is widely acknowledged that such a problem solving approach has a wider application in relation to other forms of offending. The recommendation of the **Angiolini Commission on Women Offenders**⁷ in this regard and its acceptance by the Scottish Government provide a sufficient reference point for the present discussion. The Legislature has created a receptive environment for the application of problem solving techniques by the creation of the Community Payback Order ('CPO')⁸. Part of the thinking behind the policy

⁶1995 Act s.234B introduced by the **Crime and Disorder Act 1998 s.89** with effect from 30 September 1998.

⁷<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00391828.pdf> The Part 6 discussion on Sentencing goes beyond gender issues affecting women offenders and provides a commendably aspirational model for a constructive community based system of criminal justice.

⁸ **Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 ss. 227A – 227ZN**; See the Scottish Government's 2007 report **Reforming and Revitalising: Review of Community Penalties** which recommended a single community sentence to replace the existing probation orders, community service orders, supervised attendance orders and community reparation orders.

of restructuring community based court disposals was that they should be relevant, that is to say, the penalties should be ones which “take opportunities to rehabilitate offenders by addressing underlying issues and helping them to move towards a crime-free lifestyle”.

Sometimes, especially among young offenders, the ‘problem’ is ill defined and harder to categorise than, for example, one of drug or alcohol addiction. The young person is, in fact, the disaffected product of a generational exposure to social and economic deprivation, unemployment, benefits dependency, lack of parenting and a normalised exposure to crime and the criminal justice system. In the late stages of the transition from adolescence to adulthood or in early adulthood when young people begin to think for themselves there can be a dawning realisation that there is another, better way to live life and the growth of a desire to change. That desire to change may be relatively transient and can surrender to a cynical, jaundiced and hopeless perception of reality that life will always be the same. But as long as that desire to change exists the potential for redemption is considerable.

The opportunity exists within the structure of a CPO for the Responsible Officer, that is, the Criminal Justice Social Worker, the Sheriff and other relevant agencies such as drug workers, housing officers and mental health workers to catch the wave and support the young person to a better destination. The most powerful component is, however, the personal desire of the young person to effect change in their life; the power of redemption. It is not always necessary to wait for the individual’s personal epiphany and so with patience and persistence, possibly during a custodial sentence or the intervention of a third sector organisation such as Venture Trust⁹ an individual may be helped to the realisation of a better approach to life, to develop that all important desire for change and to be equipped with the personal and social tools to effect meaningful change. Whatever the organisational structure in which the young person is engaged whether it is the criminal justice system or referral to a third sector organisation unconnected with criminal justice, the real catalyst for change is often the personal relationship with a social worker, a drug or housing worker, a prison officer or team leader in a third sector programme. Young persons need space to change and sometimes that space is inside themselves. All involved in the criminal justice system have the opportunity to create the space for change by helping individuals to that personal realisation of a better way of living and a personal desire for change.

⁹ <http://www.venturetrust.org.uk/>

Colin McConnell

Creating Space for Change

'Change, Choice and Chance'

This is a really welcome opportunity to make a contribution to the compendium of papers arising from our 'Creating Space for Change' symposium. Having launched the new corporate vision - 'Helping to Build a Safer Scotland - Unlocking Potential - Transforming Lives' - the Scottish Prison Service is keen to engage with community partners on how, together, we can encourage the community to be receptive to, and supportive of, those returning home after a period in custody to resume their daily lives. This is not only about how we put in place appropriate post-release administrative structures, mechanisms and processes, but, equally importantly, how we create the 'moral space' for returning citizens to consolidate, re-inforce and live the positive changes they have started to embrace while serving their sentence and repaying their debt to society.

I see three key challenges here: changing popular perceptions and moral stance on ex-offenders; developing a strengths-based, asset-building approach to instil a sense of worth and resilience in returning citizens which is sustainable post-release; and working in partnership to develop innovative and imaginative approaches to throughcare and transitional support. I have spoken at length about these in other contexts as I firmly believe they are the building blocks for the transformational change envisaged.

Trying to change popular perceptions and moral stance will not be easy, that much I recognise. However, that is not to say that I, staff at SPS, our partner agencies, social commentators and all those with an interest in criminal justice reform, should not rise to the considerable challenge.

Those who commit criminal offences generally, but particularly those sent to prison are, for a large section of the general public, not easily forgiven. Offenders are commonly labelled as 'bad', 'unworthy' or 'different'. These descriptors are neither true nor helpful and I would suggest the public labelling of individuals in this way only re-inforces stereotypes which can restrict or deny those seeking to recover or rehabilitate the opportunity to do so.

Writing on punitive obsession, Coleman and Sim have described: "*...a media inspired penal populism in which the language of punitive discipline has ideologically cemented the political elite with the wider population into a grim and emotional desire for inflicting vengeful retribution on the 'lesser breeds outside the law'.*"¹⁰

¹⁰ Coleman, R. and Sim, J. (2005) 'Contemporary statecraft and the punitive obsession: a critique of the new punitive thesis', in Pratt, J., Brown, D., Brown, M., Hallsworth, S. and Morrison, W. (eds.) *The New Punitiveness: Trends, theories, perspectives*, Cullompton: Willan

The popular image of the prisoner presented in the Scottish tabloid press is both sensationalist and retributive. While references to technology have moved on - 'soft justice for cons in prison 'Hiltons' enjoying flat screen televisions' - the moral retributive stance remains firmly grounded in the Victorian era. The 19th century principle of 'less eligibility' is still promulgated and still prevails in the public conscience - that is, under no circumstances should the prisoner's conditions be in any way more preferable, more comfortable or more adequate than those of the worst-off members of the community who have not been convicted of a crime.

It is my firmly held belief that 21st century Scottish society still avails itself of every opportunity to label and stigmatise the 'offender', the 'criminal', the 'convict', the 'prisoner'. Offenders are rarely seen as individuals requiring positive guidance and assistance to re-integrate into the community; accorded any degree of respect; or offered much by way of forgiveness. People are labelled and defined as a criminal class. We need to challenge this perception; we need to convey that these people are individuals with their own hopes and aspirations; we need to argue for tolerance, redemption and 'space for change'.

In the recent past, I have been the subject of vilification in the tabloid press for describing those in our custodial care as 'assets of community value'. I have no fear or hesitation in repeating and emphasising that phrase. It encapsulates the essence of the transformational change agenda that we are embarked upon in SPS in which an individual person-centred asset-building approach is critical. We need to work hard to promote a 'national conversation' in Scotland to get a positive message of tolerance, redemption and desistance over to media commentators and the public generally. There are real opportunities to approach things differently in Scotland, to think laterally about imaginative solutions and to put Scotland on the map as a world leader in penal thinking.

I have said elsewhere that we maybe need to go 'back to the future' - to re-engage with the philosophy and principles of Elizabeth Fry, John Howard and William Brebner. We need to engage more positively and constructively with the public to articulate persuasively the reasoning behind our policies, actions and intention in the criminal justice world.

We know from desistance theory that while we need to challenge and address negative offending deficits, there is also a requirement to build positive strengths and assets possessed by an individual. There is a growing and persuasive body of research evidence on the effectiveness of an asset-based approach, involving forgiveness and a personal 'redemption script', to promote desistance from re-offending on return to the community. The Cambridge academic, Alison Liebling, has written: "*Prisons are ... special moral places. That is, that they are places where relationships and the treatment of one party by another, really matter.*"¹¹ This simple observation is persuasive and convincing. It raises in an insightful and succinct way the challenges that we in SPS face in managing

¹¹Liebling, A (2004) *Prisons and their Moral Performance: A Study in Values, Quality and Prison Life*, Oxford, OUP

our prisoner population and in engaging with the individuals in our care to make their lives better and to make society safer.

Our new vision - to create opportunities for offenders in Scotland to change their lives and fulfil their potential as valued citizens - will only be possible if our staff have the appropriate skills and motivation to instil revised cultural values which promote positive staff-prisoner relationships. We are making steady progress through our Throughcare Support Officer initiative which is currently being rolled out across a number of establishments - innovative practice whereby a 'TSO' will work with partners to support the individual in the community for up to 6 weeks, mentoring and sign-posting in that immediate period of vulnerability post-release. So, the role of prisons and prison officers and their relationship to the community is changing, demanding close coalition with community colleagues to seize, promote and sustain the moment where change in the individual is possible, desired and achievable.

The lack of public and political sympathy for the offender and for prisons generally will not be easily overcome. That the Service will always face obstacles, opposition and ill-informed comment is indisputable - that is the undoubted reality of our world. It is a hard fact of life. However, it is incumbent on all of us to argue for rational debate on criminal justice in Scotland. We need to take this chance to innovate and think imaginatively about that moral, social, political, economic and physical 'space for change'. We would, I contend, benefit from an injection of reason.

Andrew McLellan

Creating Space for Change

It wasn't just that they were saying the same things. When I happened to hear a radio phone in programme about prisons a few weeks ago it seemed to me that it was even the same people saying the same things with which I was so familiar when I was inspecting prisons and used to participate in such programmes. The debate had not moved on at all.

When you are directly involved in prisons everyone is talking every day about imprisonment. It is quite startling to leave that world and to discover how uninterested nearly everyone is in prisons and prisoners and staff and families and victims. I asked my minister how often people would raise these subjects with her. "Once in a blue moon", she told me: "Maybe once a year". My minister is both approachable and intelligent: so it is not that people would be uneasy about talking to her about imprisonment – if they were interested. Nor is it that church people are less interested than others. On the contrary: the good news stories of the growth in Visitors' Centres suggest that church people are an important part of whatever public interest there is. But in general most people don't care.

Therefore, since there is so little public discussion, people keep saying the same things on radio programmes year after year. If citizens are to live out the changes they have started to make in prisons after they leave prison the communities to which they return need to understand far better than they do what prison can and cannot do.

Scottish society will only really help people coming out of prison when people stop saying over and over again the stupid things they say on radio programmes. We would all be better off if we never heard again three oft-repeated comments.

We start with "Prison: it's a holiday camp." We will find even sillier things people say about imprisonment, but that is a good start. Really silly. People pay to go to holiday camps. When last did you hear of someone trying to spend good money to go to prison?

Certainly there are people who do desperate things to go to prison: but the reasons are nothing to do with good fun and cheery entertainment. The reasons are to do with loneliness and misery and fear and inability to cope. The proper conclusion to draw from these sad cases is not about the attractions of prison life, but about the cold cruelty of much of society's attitude to its most troubled people.

Of course nearly all of the people who call prisons holiday camps have not been inside (since I have never been in a holiday camp I shall be careful not to draw conclusions about them!). I sometimes liked to take with me on prison inspection someone who had never been in a jail before. Invariably there were the same two responses - "It feels much safer than I expected" and "it is much bleaker than I expected."

Bleak it is. When people come back from holiday they feel relaxed, invigorated and happy. When people come back from prison they feel frightened, inadequate, angry and alone. It is nothing like the holiday experience. People often come out of prison with no family to go to, or nowhere to stay, or no job to go to, or with a drug problem that they know is ruining their lives.

If the rest of us do not understand that leaving prison can be terrifying, if we don't understand how very fragile people can be when they leave prison, then we will never create space for change. That is why "holiday camp" talk is so silly: it completely fails to understand who the people who leave prison are and what they need. That is why "holiday camp" talk is so dangerous. It prevents the creation of the kinds of communities where those who walk out of the prison gate have much chance of finding the support they will need. Without that support they are likely to fall back into criminality. The end of "holiday camp" talk could be the beginning of a safer Scotland.

Even sillier is the popular opinion "If you can't do the time don't do the crime". This is silly in a different way. The assumption that criminal behaviour is rational, involving a careful weighing up of consequences, is very naïve. People commit crimes thinking that they will not be caught.

On one shallow level "If you can't do the time don't do the crime" is true. But it is true of every crime and every criminal. No-one should do the crime, whether or not they can do the time. It is so obvious as to be not worth saying. What still makes people say it both the rhyme, which makes it sound clever, and the smug feeling it gives the speaker. People who say it are pleased with themselves, believing that the saying reveals both keen insight and realistic assessment of prisons and prisoners. In fact the saying reveals neither.

I once heard a preacher in Harlem, New York saying "Most Christian response to the man at the roadside in the story of the Good Samaritan is of the order of 'I told you that road to Jericho was a bad road'".

The problem with "If you can't do the time don't do the crime" is that it suggests that it is a helpful comment which moves the debate on while it is a comment which moves nothing on and is dangerous. It is dangerous because it tempts us all to think that those in prison are no business of ours. If we think that then Scotland is never going to become the kind of nation which does make it possible for prisoners to turn away from crime and stop reoffending. If we think prisoners are nothing to do with us and it's all their own fault we will do nothing to change lives: we will do nothing to reduce criminality. Creating space for change needs a very different attitude. The end of "If you can't do the time" talk could be the beginning of a safer Scotland.

The third comment I don't ever want to hear again on a radio phone-in programme is this: "Because you care about prisoners it's obvious you don't care about victims". It's another silly thing to say. Silly because the people who say it cannot possibly know how much other people care about victims; silly because it is demonstrably not true in many

cases. Many of the people who care most about victims do care a great deal about prisoners. And silly because there is no logic in it. There is nothing which logically connects caring about prisoners with not caring about victims.

Most victims of crime are young, poor men. The victims that radio phone-in callers protest their great concern for are not these: it is elderly women that they care about: quite right too. Although elderly women are relatively rare among victims of crime they are very important and need our care and support and prayers. But so do poor young men from disadvantaged backgrounds. And all of us need to learn that it is mere hypocrisy to claim that others do not care about the victims of crime if you never put your hand in your pocket for Victim Support or mutter a prayer.

There are many kinds of victims of crime - the families of prisoners, the taxpayers who carry the costs of imprisonment, Scotland itself. We are all victims of crime because Scotland is a poorer and less happy place and a less peaceful and caring society every time a crime is committed.

Which is why those who care about victims of crime are right to care about prisoners. What we need is a Scotland with fewer victims of crime, and that means a Scotland with fewer crimes being committed. We need to do everything we can to help prisoners to stop committing crimes when they are released. So it is in the interest of everyone that we should create in Scotland space for change, where people leaving prison can live out the changes they have started to make in prison. The end of “caring about prisoners means you don’t care about victims” talk could be the beginning of a safer Scotland.

Fergus McNeill

Creating Space for Change: Alienation and the alien nation

Space-related metaphors are ten-a-penny in criminal justice. For me, the one that immediately springs to mind relates not to the ‘places and spaces’ that might concern the architects or urban planners of community safety, but rather to ‘outer-space’. Some years ago, as the USA began to confront the social consequences of its ill-fated experiment with mass incarceration, the term ‘prisoner re-entry’ emerged. I’m not sure who first coined the phrase, but it is most associated with Prof Jeremy Travis of John Jay College in New York. Prof Travis has recently acted as Chair of a high-powered National Academies of Sciences report on ‘The Growth of Incarceration in the USA: Its Causes and Consequences’ (see: <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/18613/the-growth-of-incarceration-in-the-united-states-exploring-causes>). It is a sobering read. His work on re-entry has done a great deal to challenge the American political establishment and civil society institutions to think seriously about how a nation can handle (literally) millions of people returning from prisons year after year – and about whether it really makes sense to send them away in the first place.

In the Scottish context, we have tended to talk about ‘prisoner throughcare’ or ‘ex-prisoner resettlement’ or ‘reintegration’. What is most striking about the term ‘re-entry’ is its astronomical associations. It is the same term used for space-craft returning to the Earth’s atmosphere. To survive re-entry, such craft need skilful navigation, all sorts of technologically innovative design and engineering... and a soft landing place. Trajectory, speed and final destination need to be controlled, and the craft has to be able to handle exceptional pressures that cause less robust objects to explode. To avoid that sort of calamity, billions of dollars (and other currencies) have had to be spent on these craft and on their pilots.

In these respects, the metaphor is perhaps helpful; it shows the importance and costs of investing in a safe return. But, of course, it is also problematic at least insofar as it might imply that people in prison or returning from prison are not ‘of this world’. Sociologists often discuss ‘alienation’, but they are usually describing the disillusion, disaffection or disintegration that results from the ways in which our world is ordered – often unfairly. That sort of ‘alienation’ might well be a common experience of people who find their way into prison; it might even be a cause of or influence upon their offending. But punishment – at least in many of its forms – is also itself alienating. Imprisonment is a kind of deliberately inflicted disintegration; a form of banishment that creates its own problems of safe return. And, as Jeremy Travis and others have long pointed out, these are problems as much for the excluding society as for the individuals and families directly involved. The expelling society is also the receiving society.

However, ‘alien-nation’ might mean a still more worrying kind of ‘othering’ of people who go to prison; one that contrives to construct them as an alien species. The sci-fi language may make this sound like a modern development, but again as sociologists (and anthropologists) might remind us, human beings have been sorting themselves into

and out of social groups for millennia, and in myriad ways. In the context of a faith communities' initiative like this one, it might be a bit provocative to single out religious forms of 'othering', but I wonder if one of the less attractive legacies of Calvinism – one that Scotland and the USA might share to some degree – is the sort of 'deep othering' implicit in notions of the Elect and the Damned? Indeed, some sociologists of punishment have begun to explore the extent to which different cultural heritages (linked to different theologies) might help us explain markedly different approaches to punishment in near-neighbour countries.

Whatever progress this produces in terms of how we might understand 'othering', the more practical question has to be 'How do we resist it?' That question might be answered on a number of levels – from the political to the personal – but it seems to me that story-telling must be a key part of it. Although as a criminologist and a social scientist I want the sorts of evidence that my colleagues and I produce to guide us towards a more progressive, less damaging and smaller penal system, the evidence itself points me towards the importance of other kinds of narratives. Change can't be produced merely by narratives that appeal to our heads when punishment is much a matter of the heart – and of the gut.

I can think of two obvious emotionally-engaged ways to bridge the gap between the self and the other; between 'them' and 'us'. One is to reject or even just unsettle the distinction. There is a brilliant US website called 'We Are All Criminals' (<http://www.weareallcriminals.com/>) that does this simply by asking 'respectable' people, in confidence, to relate crimes that they have committed but for which they have never faced sanction. If that unsettles our assumptions about our non-offending 'selves', then the second, related approach is to support and share narratives that unsettle 'our' assumptions about the offending 'other'. In the Scottish context, both 'Positive Prisons, Positive Future' (<http://www.positiveprison.org/>) and Vox Liminis (<http://www.voxliminis.co.uk/>), in different ways, have both been doing an excellent and important job in this second task.

In a sense, we face a choice between making and sharing stories that divide us and create enemies (alien, foreign or domestic), or we can make and share stories that unite us and create friends. I'm not suggesting that there is nothing to fear, although it is worth that we often misplace our fears in as much as most of us are most hurt by those closest to ourselves. I am suggesting that, ironically, 'othering' is self-defeating and we need to be vigilant about it and against it. If we can resist the 'othering' impulse, maybe that will help create the space for change that we all need in order to flourish.

David Strang

Creating Space for Change

I am grateful to have been invited to contribute to the papers for the Scottish Prison Service Symposium in February 2015. Supporting people to make the transition from prison to the community should be central to our criminal justice system and our society. Thank you for allowing me this space to provide some reflections on the challenges facing people on this journey.

As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, I am in the privileged position of visiting every prison and young offenders institution in Scotland and speaking to prisoners and staff on a regular basis. I am always struck by the impact of these challenges on people's lives.

Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system plays an important part in contributing to the well-being of our country – of helping to build a safer Scotland. It is crucial to our criminal justice system that prisons are successful in detaining those sentenced to imprisonment by the courts in a way that keeps them safe and that protects the public. In addition, prisons also have the essential task of preparing people for eventual return to the community at the end of their sentence.

Each prisoner is unique, with their own history, family background, personality, character, hopes and ambitions. What they all have in common is that they have been sentenced by the court to a period of imprisonment as a result of their offending behaviour or the crime they have committed. Prison is a visible sign of their exclusion from mainstream society, their punishment being the deprivation of their liberty and the removal of their freedom to choose where they should live and what they should do. Many prisoners feel acutely this sense of exclusion – particularly when they know that they have caused this exclusion by their own behaviour. For many, the reality of their lives is that they are already familiar with the experience of exclusion and rejection – excluded from school, education and training, employment and housing. They may feel anger, with themselves or with the system and the circumstances which led to their situation. I am aware that many feel a sense of injustice and unfairness, as well as helplessness about their future.

If people are returned from prison to the community with these issues unresolved, what impact will this have on their capacity to reintegrate successfully?

What is needed?

The vast majority of prisoners will be released from prison and will return to their community. Many of them will need support to prepare them for successful reintegration on their release. For those serving long sentences, many aspects of

community life will have changed; it is unrealistic to expect people leaving prison after a long sentence to find it easy to adapt to life outside. Yet at the same time too many people serving short sentences are reconvicted and return to custody, having evidently not made the transition successfully.

So what makes this transition so difficult? What are the barriers to successful reintegration and how can we assist people to overcome them?

1. Relationships

Broken relationships are already a common experience of many in prison. For some, missing relationships characterise their early life experiences, with young men and women being brought up without the presence of a father or mother.

If broken relationships are a common feature for many in prison, being able to develop positive relationships will be key to supporting the individual on release. This will mean restoring broken relationships or developing new ones. Building positive relationships with family and friends provides a platform for constructive decision making, which for many has been absent from their early lives. I am convinced of the importance of encouraging those in prison to maintain and develop family bonds in as creative ways as possible. There are already some excellent examples of initiatives designed to keep and strengthen these family links.

2. Practicalities

In my experience, it is easy to underestimate the number of practical needs facing those leaving prison, such as the need for housing, employment, education or training, healthcare including addictions support, and, of course, money. It can be hard enough for anyone to negotiate these essential elements of life in the community, but doubly difficult for those just leaving prison. While there are some excellent examples of throughcare support for those leaving prison, I still see people walking through the gate without any support for their journey. Some, of course, refuse all offers of help; others are unwilling to accept all that is offered.

I am encouraged to see a joining up of work between the prison service and agencies in the community, whether third sector or statutory. I am sure there is scope for local community projects, employment schemes, faith communities and mentoring opportunities to support in practical ways the integration of those leaving prison back into the community at a local level.

3. Attitudes and Perceptions

One of the greatest barriers to successful reintegration lies in attitudes to people who have offended and perceptions of their potential. As we know, people leaving prison are often labelled by the crimes or offences they have committed and this labelling can accompany them for the rest of their lives. Potential employers, neighbours, and service

providers might all base their decision making on negative stereotypes of ex-offenders. I know of people who have been written off in the eyes of others and any attempt at making a fresh start blocked before it can begin. We all know examples of destructive comments in public discourse, media stories and political dialogue which reinforce these stereotypes.

Often what people believe about themselves can be the greatest barrier. I believe that too many people in prison have lost a sense of hope that their futures could be better; they carry a perception of the inevitability of their lives being on a downward spiral. There is a real need to encourage prisoners not just to look back to what they have done in the past, but much more importantly to look forward positively to what is possible. Without that positive self-belief that a more constructive future is possible, it is very difficult to break the cycle of disappointment and despair. Rather than being defined by their past offending, people need support in identifying their real strengths, skills, talents and potential. I have seen the power of someone walking alongside an ex-offender on their journey, sticking with them through thick and thin, and believing in them as they make that transition.

Conclusion

It is clear to me that a supportive community can make a real difference to the journey a person makes on leaving prison. The challenge for all of us in Scotland is: how can we create the space to encourage others to flourish?

Joseph Toal

Creating Space for Change

At a recent visit with prisoners in Isernia (Italy), Pope Francis stated the need of every human person for rehabilitation and conversion to God - “to walk the way of rehabilitation, this is something we all need to do – All.” It’s true we all make mistakes and can do great damage by our actions, and Pope Francis reminds us that we need to be conscious of this and rectify the harm we do, asking for forgiveness, having the courage to undertake the necessary journey of conversion and reconciliation, finding the resolve to avoid further mistakes. We all need to be open to such a process and we can therefore identify with those in prison as they are invited to embrace it with honesty and courage, particularly in regard to the harm they have done to others.

In the Christian tradition we turn to God our loving Father to ask for forgiveness knowing that he remembers us and walks alongside us as a true companion – He welcomes us back and invites us to walk humbly along his way of rehabilitation. The great parable of the Prodigal Son in Chapter 15 of St Luke’s Gospel explains the Lord’s mercy and the possibility of complete rehabilitation for the sinner with the merciful father, who reaches out so compassionately to the prodigal son who has returned seeking acceptance and forgiveness. The words of the Lord’s Prayer – *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us* – constantly call to mind both our need for God’s forgiveness and our responsibility to forgive our fellow men and women. The teaching of the Lord Jesus therefore encourages faith in a merciful and forgiving God, and a corresponding need for those made in his image and likeness to offer forgiveness to, and accept it from, their fellow men and women. The acceptance of God’s willingness to forgive brings the sinner to seek God willingly and trustingly and then allow the possibility of transformation and rehabilitation.

There is a danger that while in prison, as with many other places, people become ‘institutionalised’, static, and thus less motivated to seek a better way of living. Those seeking rehabilitation must overcome this possible paralysis and be willing to begin a journey, which requires courage and motivation to have the desire and willingness to take a step each day. From the Christian perspective, an awareness of God’s faithful and sustaining love and the power of his grace makes it possible to begin this journey and to find hope that there is indeed something better and the possibility of a renewed way of living.

There have been many debates on the role of prisons, but it is now widely understood that the response to crime should focus less on punishing the offender and more on repairing the damage caused by crime and on rehabilitation. This does not deny that there is always an element of punishment in imprisoning somebody for committing a crime, but the overriding factor in doing so is to try to assist that person to change and to be reintegrated eventually into civil society as an ordinary citizen willing to make their own valuable contribution to family and community.

Again, Pope Francis in an address to lawyers observed that ‘there is a necessary asymmetry between crime and punishment; that an eye or a broken tooth cannot be restored by taking or breaking another. It is a matter of bringing justice to the victim, not punishing the aggressor’. Pope Francis added ‘in our societies we tend to think that crimes are solved when we capture and sentence the criminal, largely avoiding the damage caused or without paying sufficient attention to the situation in which the victims find themselves.’ It would be a mistake, he said; ‘to identify reparation solely with punishment, to confuse justice and vengeance, which can only contribute to increasing violence.’ It is not easy though to take this fully on board and to promote a willingness in society and in local communities to see beyond the perception that punishment of the offender should be paramount.

Crime is frequently rooted in economic and social inequality and it often seems that society is inclined to discard those who are not successful and to prevent the slow, the weak or the less gifted from having the same opportunity in life as those more able intellectually and economically. Criminal activity and subsequent imprisonment can result from not having a stake in society and a lack of any idea of how to develop and make a valuable contribution through work, family and community activity. Merely condemning those who commit crime is often counter-productive, as these persons can already be quite disadvantaged if not somewhat down-trodden. Responsible people who encounter and work with such persons in prison must do everything in their power to correct, improve and educate the whole person so that he or she is able to mature into a stronger and better man or woman. Signs of such maturity may be seen in the respect they afford to others and themselves, in an ability not to become discouraged while facing the damage they may have caused to others, and in the determination shown in seeking to live a virtuous life in which evil thoughts and dispositions are left behind. In Christian terms the possibility of redemption and a new beginning is at the heart of the Gospel and must inspire the work done to bring those in prison to seek change and a virtuous way of life.

It would seem that the great challenge for all involved is to help those in prison to rehabilitate, to re-embark upon the path of good, to be the authentic people who move on from their past failures or transgressions to become merciful themselves and with hope for a better future. Structures and opportunities offered in prison need to foster such growth rather than suppressing, discouraging and isolating those serving time because of their crimes. The Church in the name of Jesus can assist in promoting a system of justice that is humanising, genuinely reconciliatory, a justice that leads the wrongdoer, through a path of reflection and education along with openness to the need for penance, to rehabilitation and hopefully the possibility of full reinsertion into their family and local community.

The opportunities available to those released from prison and the reception afforded them by the community to which they return plays a crucial part in making rehabilitation possible, building on the progress achieved during the custodial sentence. This may not always be easy to achieve as negative and suspicious attitudes towards offenders do persist and in poorer and disadvantaged communities there are fewer opportunities for

work and productive involvement. For those who provide a supportive presence to those seeking their help, further help is needed so that they can work in cooperation with others involved in supporting rehabilitation and in offering the necessary fresh start to those who return home.

It would seem important to promote awareness that change is possible, and that through the Christian faith the grace of God does effect this change in those who reach out for it. On this basis a welcome must be afforded to those who have sought this change and a recognition of the need for the support of their faith community to sustain it. A spirit of reconciliation, a willingness to forgive the past, has to be fostered even in difficult circumstances, and perhaps on occasions support offered to families and neighbours to be reconciled.

When Jesus was asked the question “*Who is my neighbour?*” he told the parable of the Good Samaritan, through which he instructed us on the danger of being blind to the needs of the hurt or wounded neighbour in our midst, and asked us to reach out in love and service to that neighbour like the Good Samaritan. Those released from prison may well need this helping hand from compassionate and concerned neighbours and may indeed require something extra in the way of encouragement and support in order to maintain their own journey of rehabilitation and the commitment to virtuous living. This may be especially true when other negative influences may draw them again towards their former life-style and perhaps criminal activities. It would be good to hear that those who have returned home motivated to make this fresh start will find whatever support they require from their faith community and be thus sustained in the journey embarked upon in prison.