

Welcome to a round up of our latest news

Mentor Training

Our monthly mentor training (Reflect, Share, Connect) is now well underway and has been a great opportunity for our Volunteers to receive relevant training and share their experience, as they connect with one another. As such a dispersed team across the region, being able to engage with each other and the Community Chaplains in this way has been really appreciated.

We meet on a Tuesday evening via Zoom once a month and so far have considered self-care, issues related to substance misuse and autism. Over the next few months, we will be exploring mental health issues, the probation service and other areas relevant to enhancing mentoring skills, client needs or client services. Our aim is to offer ongoing training to help our Volunteers feel more confident and better equipped in supporting their clients. But perhaps the greatest benefit is that of connection; being able to put faces and names together; for Mentors in Cornwall to connect with those in Somerset; to feel part of a team.

With so much experience of life between them, our Volunteer Mentors have much to offer each other in an interconnected network of support and encouragement. So if you are one of our Volunteer Mentors and have not yet joined us to Reflect, Share, Connect, we would love to see you! Why not come along to meet other members of the team? For more information contact alli@southwestcc.org.uk.

Staff News

This month we say goodbye to one of our Community Chaplains, Rachel, as she moves on to a new part of the country to be closer to family. Rachel has contributed enormously to the work of the organisation over the last few years, and we will miss her.

“As I wave goodbye to you all, mostly from a zoom screen, know that you continue to be in my prayers and thoughts. I pray for your continued grace and wisdom as you face new challenges and opportunities together to continue changing the lives of those around you.”



Rachel, Community Chaplain



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Joe's Change of Direction

Joe was released in 2017, having spent most of the previous 28 years in prison, a result of having been involved in acquisitive crime from an early age. It started with stealing expensive cars, led on to house breaking and eventually armed robbery. Somewhere along the line he received a life sentence.



On release, Joe started to try and work out a world that was very different to the one he had known previously. When he tried to sign on for benefits the Job Centre couldn't trace his records and told him he would have to prove that he exists. Joe's mentor helped him sort this out, but it took many, many weeks for his benefits to start. He found himself sorely tempted to shoplift to get by. One time he shared with his mentor that at the door of a big store 'he came to his senses', put the item he was attempting to steal down, and walked away empty-handed.

Fast forward, and Joe has been out of prison for almost four years. It has been a difficult and challenging journey for him as he has moved location three times, his family have shunned him and he has struggled with his mental health. On top of that, he has several physical health issues that need investigation but being terrified of hospitals, has missed many appointments. Yesterday though, he managed to summon up enough courage to travel with his mentor to see a consultant, and to agree to further treatment. It's a small, but significant step forward.

Slowly and surely he is moving away from his old way of life and speaks and thinks differently about his identity and who he wants to be. He'd love to be able to drive a nice car, but unlike previously he wants to do so legitimately now (with a proper licence, tax and insurance), so he's saving up for driving lessons.

Joe seems to appreciate having a mentor on his journey. He says:

"Mental health is not too good at the moment but I'm doing OK, getting by. Thank you for everything you do for me and what you've done for me. If it weren't for you, I don't know where I would be. You're a diamond."



If you are a person of faith please hold these concerns and other items included in this newsletter in prayer:

- *Those who are leaving prison at this challenging time, as Covid restrictions remain in place in most prisons.*
- *The staff of the probation service, as they support people completing their sentences in the community.*
- *Our trustees, for the work they do behind the scenes to ensure staff, mentors and clients can be safe and supported.*
- *Prison chaplains and their teams, as they continue to work around the clock under pressure.*

Finance News

Our financial year ended on 31st March and we are delighted to report that we have been able to balance the books with room to spare! Grants received during recent months have included: The Oakdale Trust, The Tudor Trust, The Allen Lane Foundation, The Souter Charitable Trust, The CAF Resilience Fund, and The Marsh Christian Trust.

Our deepest gratitude to all the individuals, faith communities and grant making trusts that have enabled the work of Community Chaplaincy to reach many lives throughout this year.

Thank you so much!



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