

HEALING THE HEALERS

SPECIAL EDITION: COVID-19

A **LIVE** TOWNHALL

Prison Chaplains: On the Spiritual Front Lines in Correctional Facilities

EXPERT REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

A PROJECT FROM

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Introduction

At Odyssey Impact, we believe in the power of personal story to change perspectives, change attitudes, and even to change the world. As the COVID-19 pandemic intensified in the U.S., Odyssey Impact responded to the needs of faith leaders, spiritual care providers, and faith communities by convening live town halls on requested topics. Experts, leaders, scholars, and on-the-ground providers shared their candid insights and questions arising in this unprecedented time.

Our hope is the following guide will help current Faith Leaders in their work to lead a thriving congregation or community and faculty as they prepare future faith leaders to navigate trauma.

May our networks of care be strengthened, our imaginations expanded, and our hope ignited.



For the creation of this written resource, we are grateful to the Rev. Dr. Rachelle Green, Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Education at Fordham University, New York.

Panelists



CHAPLAIN ZEYNAB ABDULLAYEVA

Albion Correctional Facility
New York



DR. RACHELLE GREEN

Fordham University
New York



REV. LILLIAN HINES

Northern State Prison
New Jersey



REV. ULLI KLEMM

Religious Services Administrator
Pennsylvania Dept. of Corrections



RABBI DR. SHAUL MARSHALL PRAVER

Cheshire Correctional Institute
Connecticut

Moderators



REV. DR. KATIE GIVENS KIME

Director of Religion and Civic Engagement
Odyssey Impact

Expert Reflection and Discussion Guide

Dr. Rachelle Green

Our convening of prison chaplains and people of faith who care about issues of incarceration on May 13, 2020 resulted in important conversations between a wide variety of perspectives. Amidst any diverse gathering of correctional chaplains, the enormous differences between contexts is important to recognize; even the role of chaplain is performed in a wide range of ways. Thus, we are especially eager to have the following curated video clips for further engagement.

Video Clip #1: When your feet are tired, and ears are worn: Care for Caregivers

Video Clip #2: Grieving in Prison: The Trauma of Increased Death and Dying

Video Clip #3: Care for Families and Children of the Incarcerated and Decarceration

We invite you to reflect personally, with your staff or colleagues, or in small group discussions among those with whom you provide spiritual care. After viewing each of the following sections, please take time to reflect first on what the speakers share. Then, consider the prompts below for ways you may continue to respond and practice care amid the unfolding and aftermath of pandemic in your midst.



Dr. Rachelle Green

Rachelle Green is an Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Education. She holds a Ph.D. in Religion from Emory University's Person, Community, and Religious Life program. In her doctoral program, Green directed the Certificate in Theological Studies Program, a theological education program for women in prison. She also served a two-year term as the Assistant Director of the Youth Theological Initiative, a theological education program for high school juniors and seniors.

When your feet are tired, and ears are worn:

Care for Caregivers

Video Clip #1

(if using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code - 13:30-18:23)

“Caring for myself is not about self-indulgence, it’s about self-preservation...” - AUDREY LORDE, *A Burst of Light and Other Essays*

In the best of times, the work of caring for others can be physically, psychologically, and spiritually draining. As Rev. Ulli Klemm describes it, the toil is compounded in the midst of a global pandemic. Caring for the self may seem like an individual concern, but it is deeply communal. How we care for ourselves can have a significant impact on how we are able to show up for others. Rev. Lillian Hines acknowledges that far too often, spiritual caregivers are wounded healers who often overlook caring for themselves. The wounded healer has been a frequently used metaphor for spiritual caregivers for decades. It beckons caregivers to acknowledge their own wounds and needs, while pressing them to consider that caring for themselves is an integral part in how they care for others.

When weary feet can rest and strained ears find time to renew, one can walk a longer path and listen with more sincerity. How might caring for yourself become a more integral part of your ministry or professional practice? What are some ways that you are practicing self-care, both alone and with others? What other metaphors beyond the wounded healer describe your approach to spiritual care during this pandemic?

★ Additional Resource

A Trinity of Wholeness: Contemplation, Action, and Healing

<https://sojo.net/articles/faith-action/trinity-wholeness-contemplation-action-and-healing>

by Teresa Pasquale Mateus

Grieving in Prison: The Trauma of Increased Death and Dying

Video Clip #2

(if using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code - 26:39-31:00)

Death and grief are natural phenomena in the human experience, but grieving in prison during a pandemic presents a different set of challenges. Consider what it might be like for persons living and working in prisons and jails where social distancing is not possible, PPE resources are scarce, and testing may be sporadic at best. As anxiety increases concerning one's own health, imagine the concern and stress of not knowing if the death notices from the chaplain are going to be about your family member. Imagine the trauma. Imagine the grief. And now imagine it magnified. COVID-19 has made the process of protecting life and grieving death more challenging for everyone, especially for persons living and working in prisons.

Our speakers remind us that grief counseling, communal support, and recognition of pain and anxiety will be needed in prisons far beyond the day when COVID-19 is no longer considered a pandemic. What resources and practices have been helpful to you as you navigate grief? How might you or your community be able to partner with correctional institutions to share those resources with persons living and working in prisons? How might you advocate for increased counseling and care for incarcerated persons?

★ Additional Resource

The Singular Sorrow of Grieving Behind Bars

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/11/10/the-singular-sorrow-of-grieving-behind-bars>

Care for Families and Children of the Incarcerated and Decarceration

Video Clip #3

(if using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code - 37:13-39:33 and 47:10-48:40)

Part 1 (Time code: 37:13-39:33 in the full town hall link)

Due to COVID-19, more than half of people living in prisons and jails are unable to see their children and nearly all are prohibited from any outside visitations. Likewise, there are 2.7 million children who have a parent incarcerated and numerous mothers, fathers, spouses, and friends whose already difficult separation from a loved one is worsened by the pandemic. Networks of support and care are critical to help people navigate times of difficulty and anxiety.

Our speakers shared some examples of how chaplains and faith communities are responding to the need for connection and care. In the absence of physical visits and face-to-face interaction, what are additional ways to establish emotional and spiritual support systems during this pandemic? How might those support systems be extended to incarcerated persons? To their families?

Prisons contain an overwhelming percentage of people who would be considered vulnerable in the midst of a pandemic: those with pre-existing health complications, elderly people, and people whose long prison sentences have exacerbated health problems. But the reality of how prisons are constructed means that all incarcerated persons are at high risk of contracting, spreading, and potentially dying from Coronavirus. In order to diminish the potentially catastrophic impact of COVID-19 on people incarcerated in close spaces like prisons and jails, there have been efforts to decarcerate. Decarceration calls for the immediate release of incarcerated people such as the elderly, pregnant, immunocompromised prisoners, as well as all mothers and infants in prison nurseries, and mothers who are postpartum. As Rev. Kime remarked, decarceration is a complex and important conversation, and chaplains' relationships to

these issues are widely varied.

How is your local context handling COVID-19 in prisons and jails? Are there efforts to decarcerate? What processes are in place in local jails and prisons to protect those living and working inside? How can your community help those who are re-entering society during this time?

Part 2 (Time code: 47:10-48:40 in the full town hall link)

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★ Additional Resource

The Singular Sorrow of Grieving Behind Bars

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★ Additional Resource

A book about and by children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers:
Zehr, Howard. *What Will Happen to Me?* Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2010.

Hidden Consequences: The Impact of Incarceration on Dependent Children

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/hidden-consequences-impact-incarceration-dependent-children>

Eric Martin, March 1, 2017, National Institute of Justice

The Devastating Emotional Toll of Suspending Prison Visits

<https://www.thenation.com/article/society/prison-visits-suspension/>

Further exploration:

The Marshall Project and Prison Policy Initiative are helpful resources for learning about what is happening in prisons during Coronavirus:

- <https://www.themarshallproject.org/coronavirus>
- <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/virusresponse.html>
- <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/03/27/slowpandemic/?nav>