

New ministry for ex-convict Aitken as prison chaplain

By Olivia Rudgard -

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

JONATHAN AITKEN is to be ordained and plans to become a prison chaplain, he has revealed.

The former Conservative Cabinet minister, who became a Christian while serving seven months in prison for perjury, is to become a Church of England minister at St Paul's Cathedral later this month.

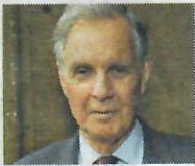
The ordination will take place on June 30 and is to be carried out by Sarah Mullally, the first female Bishop of London, he told *The Sunday Times*.

While in prison Mr Aitken, 75, joined a prayer group which included "an armed robber, a blower (someone who cracks safes), a kiter (a cheque forger), a couple of murderers and a dipper (a pickpocket)", he told the newspaper.

On his release in 2000 he studied theology. In his autobiography he revealed he was interviewed for entry by Dr Graham Tomlin, the Bishop of Kensington, then vice-principal of the college.

Dr Tomlin said: "I have known Jonathan Aitken for several years and this is a calling that has grown within him and

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been tried and tested by many others.

"His experience of the prison system, both from the inside and the outside gives him a unique perspective to offer Christian ministry in this vital area of our life as a society. He brings Christian learning from his theological studies, wide life experience, knowledge of the wider issues in criminal justice and a pastoral understanding of the needs of prisoners that will help strengthen the Church's ministry to all."

Mr Aitken was sentenced to 18 months at the Old Bailey in 1999 after admitting perjury and perverting the course of justice during a libel trial against *The Guardian*. He persuaded his then teenage daughter Victoria to give him a false alibi after the newspaper reported that while a minister in charge of defence procurement, he allowed the Saudi royal family to pay his £1,000 hotel bill at the Paris Ritz in 1993.