

# LINK

supporting the workplace, caring for people

Welcome to this first "LINK" of 2013 with the first of what we hope will be a series of introductions to CIGB chaplains. Do take note of the AGM date—should be an exhilarating meeting. We've also got a poem (another first) for you, and news of an exciting initiative from Birmingham City Council.

## Introduction to a chaplain

Linda Isiorho explains what led her to become a Fire and Rescue Service Voluntary Mission chaplain.

### "From crackling to chaplaincy!"

I experienced the fire service when I was about 6 years old. My father worked as a land agent on a country estate in Norfolk. One night we had an urgent call that the piggery was on fire, a problem with the electrics. The piggery was full of sows that had all just given birth. For some reason that no one can recall, my father took me with him. We went up on his bicycle with me sitting on the cross bar. The noise, as we drew near, was amazing. The fire was roaring, flames were leaping up into the dark sky and pigs were squealing - which was encouraging as a silent pig is a dead pig. Some of the piglets were running around with flames coming off their little backs. There were several fire engines there. Some of the officers joined the farmhands in trying to catch the poor piglets, getting their own hands burned. Gradually, out of a scene of chaos, these brave men, (they were all men in those days), brought order, created a calm. They were kind and reassuring. I was hugely impressed.



Many years later, during summer vacation, I worked as a cleaner at the Fire Services Technical College in Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire. I learnt a lot about the technical side of the fire and rescue service, and about what it takes to go into situations of danger, knowing that you could be hurt. The emphasis is on procedure and on team work. You know that the officer behind you will be there. Each member of the team rehearses continuously. I could tell you about some of the sights that officers deal with but I am sure there is no need. You can use your imaginations.

I remember one man talking about a young woman whose house caught fire. She managed to get her three children out of the window to the waiting officers and then she suddenly realised that she was naked. She turned away from the window to go and get dressed. The officer telling me this recalled how they shouted at her not to go back, they would get her covered up. House fires are poisonous with furniture and carpets emitting deadly fumes that can take seconds to kill you. She never came back to the window and later they recovered her corpse.

So there is often shock and grief to deal with and those are draining, life-warping emotions. Yet the fire service



is a very upbeat place with lots of banter. But fire officers form a tight-knit bunch and they may well be cautious about letting a strange chaplain in.

Initial meetings are like trial by teacup. You sit down with the watch around the mess table and you are basically asked to explain what you're about. One question comes up in various guises: how do we know we can trust you? Chaplains need to be transparent and faithful.



When I think of the work of fire officers, the rescue, the saving, the generosity and compassion – I can only call their work Christ-like. Having local chaplains also means that there is a stronger link with the local community because most officers do not live near their stations, as you would expect. It is a privilege to be entrusted to share ministry with this brave group of people.



**Do you feel inspired?  
Might you (or someone you know) be interested in workplace chaplaincy?**

CIGB chaplains can be found in many varied workplaces including retail, airport, NEC, fire service and others. CIGB will be running an **'Introduction to Workplace Chaplaincy'** course on 5 consecutive Wednesdays beginning 10th April. The time hasn't been decided yet—what would you prefer?  
Daytime, 'twilight' or evening?  
if you are interested please contact us at [cigbadmin@birmingham.anglican.org](mailto:cigbadmin@birmingham.anglican.org)

**DATE FOR  
YOUR DIARY**

CIGB's Annual Meeting will take place on 13<sup>th</sup> May in the Banking Hall of Wragge & Co., 55 Colmore Row, B3 2AS. Refreshments from 5.30pm followed by the business meeting. Guest speakers this year will include Tim Watts, CEO of Pertemps; Rob Johnston, TUC Regional Secretary and someone from the Church who will speak on the theme "Temporary Working: Dynamic and Precarious?" The meeting will end at 8.00pm.

**Giving hope, changing lives**

"What I needed was a road map ... it was all so confusing and there was so much to take in" was the comment about careers advice from a young person looking to discern his future in Birmingham.

This evidence is part of the findings from Birmingham's Social Inclusion Process. 'Giving Hope Changing Lives' is the title for their report covering topics such as: 'How can we help young people to fully develop their talents?', 'Why are some places better off?' and 'How can wellbeing improve and everyone share in the city's prosperity?'

The report finds that there is still a 10-year life-expectancy gap between the best and worst areas – and that fact has not changed for a number of years.

The Council are co-ordinating a Social Inclusion Challenge Unit to make changes: eg to encourage more work experience provision for young people, to set up a 'Birmingham Jobs Fund', to make public transport more affordable and to develop a 'Right to Play' campaign for young people, (amongst other recommendations). The inquiry was chaired by the Bishop of Birmingham. Councillor John Cotton is encouraging partners to join him and work with him on the implementation of these recommendations.

**John would like to hear from you if you would like to get involved:**

[john.cotton@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:john.cotton@birmingham.gov.uk)



**Universal Credit and Benefits Changes**

The Department of Work and Pensions think they have 'about' (!) 42 working age benefit streams. Universal Credit is supposed to make them simpler and mesh together so that 'work always pays', but DWP acknowledge that people will face a number of 'challenges' as this new system is implemented this October. Universal Credit will be paid as a single monthly household amount: 'households' will have to decide how this money is to be shared out between family members and over the month. The credit administration will be 'digital by default'. Also, from April, Housing Benefit is being capped and Council Tax Credit is being reduced ...

Some of the issues and consequences—eg how to provide support and information—will be discussed at a briefing on 27th Feb, 9am-1pm, by FaithAction at St Pauls Crossover, 405b Belchers Lane, Birmingham.

For further enquiries please contact:

Hannah.walker@faithaction.net (0845 094 6350)

**LAST WORD**

Or should that be 'last words'? Here's a poem ... make sure you read to the end!

**My Vicar at work**

It's Mothering Sunday next week.  
Is it?

Yes, Easter's early.  
How do you know?  
My vicar at work,  
He told me.



I don't live in the Abbey parish.  
Yes you do.  
No I don't.  
They changed the boundaries.  
My vicar at work  
He told me.

Mum, I am getting married.  
In church, I hope.  
Of course.  
You better see our vicar.  
First of all I must ask Jim.  
My vicar at work.

Change of plan, no church wedding.  
Your granny will be upset.  
Well we don't go to church.  
And I don't know our vicar  
I've talked to Jim.  
My vicar at work.



Getting married at Westwick Hall.  
A civil ceremony?  
Yes, family only, in the morning.  
What a disappointment.  
Wedding blessing in the afternoon.  
Conducted by my vicar at work.

I am not a vicar.  
It's in an Anglican colleague's parish.  
I am a free church minister.  
A chaplain visiting the workplace.  
For many I am the church  
Their vicar at work.



Y Mochyn Daear

**DON'T FORGET ...**

Send us your news, your stories, your pictures, your quotable quotes and your jokes and stay in touch:

CIGB  
7th Floor, 1 Colmore Row  
Birmingham  
B3 2BJ

Tel: 0121 426 0425  
Email: [cigbadmin@birmingham.anglican.org](mailto:cigbadmin@birmingham.anglican.org)  
[www.cigb.org.uk](http://www.cigb.org.uk)