

CHAPLAINS AT WORK



July 2019

The start of the summer holidays.. From the rising of the sun to its setting, may the name of the LORD be praised!

supporting the workplace, caring for people

Loneliness Among Working People

“The effect of a lack of social relationships on mortality is similar to that of smoking 15 cigarettes a day” Many of our Chaplains encounter people who work long hours on their own: some have no-one at home to talk to either. Val Dalton writes:

The Health Statistic comes from a recent report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society, researched by Faith Action. The report looks at the contribution to society by faith-based organisations into communities that are often marginalised.

The case study from CIGB Workplace Chaplaincy interested the researchers particularly, because it pointed to an often overlooked place of loneliness - the workplace. As more people work in the ‘gig economy’, isolation is a growing problem for working people.

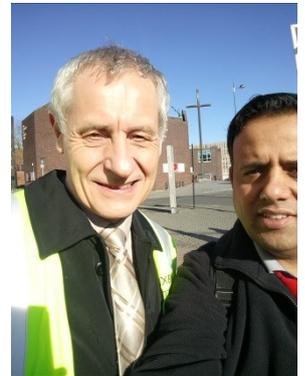
In the foreword to the report, Stephen Timms MP, Chair of the APPG on Faith and Society, writes “The UK is suffering a loneliness epidemic.. Loneliness affects people of all ages. It is heartbreaking. It is often hidden, and faith groups have a vital part to play.. Faith groups are deeply rooted in the community and are in it for the long haul. They address emotional and spiritual needs. They are uniquely well-placed to respond to loneliness and social isolation . . .”

Most of the articles included in the report are about wonderful faith initiatives that people attend—ie the lonely people actually have to cross the threshold of the faith organisation - and this can often be the most difficult thing: particularly if being lonely has resulted in all kinds of negative thoughts about yourself.

Peter Sellick wrote an article for the report describing the work of CIGB Chaplains who, as we know, go out into the working community rather than expecting the community to come to us.

There is sometimes a misconception about loneliness being something that only the elderly experience. But the report quotes from the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness which found that over 9,000,000 people said they are always or often lonely: people of all ages and in all walks of life.

The relationships that Chaplains build with the people they visit can be so important, particularly in those industries where people work long anti-social hours, on their own: transport, logistics, retailing, hospitality.. Chaplains often hear ‘I’m so glad to see you—you’re the first person I’ve spoken to all day.’



Bus driver and Chaplain!

Some of the bus-drivers our chaplains meet are single people, working on their own, at times which are frequently difficult—traffic, angry passengers... Retail workers in smaller shops are often on their own for long hours. But of course, Chaplains will stop for a chat *because that’s what we do* (see Dolvis’s comments about Bullring Chaplaincy on page 3!)

People can be ‘isolated’ even in relationships: Chaplains find that people talk about bereavement, family worries, debt, illness etc in a way that they find difficult if talking to family members or colleagues. Chaplains offer chat and relationship that is a ‘safe place’. *You can read the APPG report at faithaction.net.*

Invitation to Elaine’s Induction!

CIGB is delighted that Revd Elaine Hutchinson, leader for the be.friend Birmingham City Centre Retail Chaplaincy team, will be inducted onto the Ministerial team at Carrs Lane Church on Sat 28th Sept 2pm.

To support Elaine at this service, call Elaine on 01216436151 or email chaplain@carrslane.co.uk Please let Elaine know by 26th August.

**QUOTABLE-
QUOTE**

Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured (Mark 6:56)

MEET THE CHAPLAIN

Christine McAteer, a Chaplain with National Express West Midlands buses tells us a little bit about what led her into Chaplaincy 6 years ago as we continue our 'Meet the Chaplain' series:



I became involved as a bus chaplain for NX West Midlands by accident. One morning whilst job hunting, I saw an advert on the Birmingham Ecumenical News for Fire Station chaplains.

"Ohh! Visiting Fire Stations.. How exciting!" I thought, I clicked on the link and a few days later Peter Sellick emailed me to tell me about the Introduction to Workplace Chaplaincy course.

At the end of the course I was the last one to be interviewed. I think I was forgotten about until I piped up, "What about me?..." "Well you seem to be a reasonably sensible person with a bit of life experience." Peter said at the interview, "What would you like to do?" I had been thinking about the buses, a fairly new area of Chaplaincy for the past week.

I used to teach at Hagley RC High School where sadly nearly 25 years ago a music teacher and a whole group of Year 8 pupils had been killed in a minibus accident on their way home from a concert trip to London. I t was known that the teacher had been under a lot of stress and had driven after a day of teaching. Since that accident the law was changed so that another staff member accompanies the pupils and the seats are now forward facing with seatbelts.

I recognised what a responsible job it is to be in charge of a vehicle full of people. The effects of that Road Traffic Accident can still be felt in the community and by the families to this day. So anything that can help to lower the risk of a RTA has surely got to be welcome and that is where a Chaplain can play a small part by supporting a driver who may be stressed or worried.

I have come across drivers who feel very lonely due to the long working hours. They have appreciated being able to talk about how they feel with a Chaplain even if it's just for a few minutes.



**CIGB Annual Meeting 2019
New for Old? Trading-In Birmingham's Markets**

Market trading has been at the heart of Birmingham for 800 years. Buying and selling brought people together and caused the town to grow. This year's CIGB Annual Meeting at St Martins in the Bullring was held near the original site of those first markets, to discuss "What place will market trading have in the future heart of the city? "

Smithfield is the old name that the Council are re-using for the enormous development that is going to replace the wholesale and retail market site in the south of the city centre. The Council's Assistant Director of Development, and staff from the Lendlease Developers explained to chaplains and guests their plans for the next few years: including a new market-hall, apparently with space for affordable and boutique/aspirational trades.

But CIGB Market Chaplains wanted to know: how could today's current traders be helped to survive the long transition? Elaine Hutchinson, spoke on behalf of the market chaplains and of her own experience of the markets. She remembered the familial feel and excitement of going to the markets as child. But things are very different now. The current traders' livelihoods are under threat not only because of changing shopping habits, but also because of public transport changes, and the management conditions at the markets.

The 40 gathered friends, trustees and chaplains had a lot of empathy for those who still depend on the markets. They also asked about the provision of community assets for the thousands of new residents and workers who would be based at Smithfield. How were diversity and faith being planned for? There were no clear answers.

Our new Chair, Steve Faber, spoke of his encouragement from reading Chaplains reports in the Annual Review. He noted that in many of CIGB's Chaplaincies, our chaplains are standing with people going through very challenging experiences.

Our Treasurer Patrick Bryan said that CIGB had suffered a considerable deficit (£12,000) in 2018, partly because of delays by one of our corporate donors. Trustees had seen that finances were on a downward trajectory: one action is the launch of a new 'Friends' scheme, to get new subscriptions and donations from people who support our vision and work.

QUOTABLE-QUOTE

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one.” (Luke 10:41-42)

Around the Chaplaincies

Some updates from Chaplains about what they've been up to recently . . .

NEC Group

David writes: “The Interfaith Chaplaincy is now in new offices at the



NEC campus with additional Prayer & Quiet spaces throughout the growing business. As well as enjoying a dedicated workspace, Chaplaincy is always invited to company presentations and events. With pivotal involvement in the Wellbeing suite for staff/visitor support, we are signposted on the NEC recruitment website, staff intranet and handbooks; and our holistic support extends to the other venues and centres including the ICC and Arena Birmingham. Events companies often invite us, wishing to offer holistic equality, inclusion and interfaith Chaplaincy.”



Waterways



Richard writes . . . “Many chaplains are assisting boaters who have long-term and complex needs. I have conducted services at various festivals and was asked to conduct a service on a trip boat where a couple renewed their wedding vows. The Waterways Chaplaincy continues to grow with more people applying to join us. In Birmingham and the Black Country area we have 2 probationary chaplains who are due to be commissioned in September joining the national team of 80 chaplains. We are appointing two new national Deputy Chaplains, one north and one south, and their names will be announced soon.”



Birmingham City Centre: Bull Ring / Link Street

BULLRING BIRMINGHAM

Dolvis writes . . . “Chaplaincy continues to have it’s highs and lows. Over the last few weeks I’ve supported a worker whose relative committed suicide. That was difficult and took a lot of talking and listening. We have met up since and it’s good to see that that person is coping very well along with the rest of the family. One thing I’ve noticed is that most of the time, whatever people’s beliefs, there seems to be a respect for God and for me—the Chaplain representing God. One worker told me he was not a Christian but has some attributes of a Christian, then said “ I’m not all there

but who knows what will happen next?” I was quite choked. We have learnt that nothing good is ever easy so I continue to gently navigate my way through the work of a retail Chaplain. I continue to find this fascinating and of course exciting at times.”



Longbridge Retail



Val writes . . . “The High Street has been very quiet since Bournville College ‘broke up’. It’s interesting

that the students, who bring so much business to the various food outlets on the High Street, are viewed in a different light by the staff of the supermarket. The hotel is looking forward to lots of summer visitors (easy transport links to the city centre) to augment their business clients, and the restaurant is expecting an increase in breakfast numbers during school holidays as children under 16 eat for free when accompanied by a paying adult. Life, with all its joys and trials continues: stories of births, bereavements, and everything in-between continue to come my way, and it is a joy and a privilege to serve God as a Retail Chaplain.



Bournville College



Thelma writes . . . “Give thanks to the Lord ... His love endures forever!” The chaplains closed the academic year in the social area with a service of Thanksgiving. Eventually working out how to connect to the college Bluetooth(!) we played feel-good music to attract attention, read a poem of thankfulness, prayers and blessings, and handed out sweets and bookmarks - our stock in trade! We wished everyone a wonderful summer, and good results.



We’ve been back since to meet with an assistant principal and do some ongoing training. Now we celebrate the summer, to return in September refreshed and renewed by God’s grace.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

There is a growing evidence base that religion and spirituality can be beneficial for recovery and wellbeing and that people want their spiritual and religious needs addressed .. but there is still a sense in which secular bodies have been wary about embracing such opportunities. (Theos Report: Christianity and Mental Health)

Approaching Mental Health

What does depression look like?

Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace is high up the agenda at the moment; and Chaplains are among those who may be called upon to help.

Tanya Arroba, Airport Chaplaincy Team Leader, led CIGB Chaplains in some recent training about Approaching Mental Health. She is an occupational psychologist, and has written books about managing stress at work.

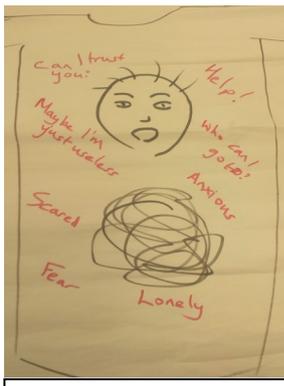
A key report last year by Stevenson and Famer on mental health in the workplace recommended that all large workplaces should have tailored mental health support. Resources have been slow: but Chaplains could be really helpful here - to individuals and businesses.

Mental health, mental ill-health, mental wellbeing, mental illness.. the words are hard to define. And real difficulties can be even harder to see, understand or know what to do about. A number of chaplains came to the training a little bit apprehensive: what are chaplains expected to do? what happens if it all goes wrong?

Some of our chaplains have already done Mental Health First Aid training. This encourages people to have the confidence to approach people who may appear to be in difficulty: to listen, and maybe offer suggestions of support. We can all start by asking: "It looks to me as if you are struggling a bit... have I got that right?". The MHFA course gives a basic understanding of what may be going on in with unusual behavioural/emotional/mental patterns, and what might be a helpful response.

Tanya suggested that changes in behaviour/health/mind/emotion may be something to notice as a sign that workplace stress has been getting too much and for too long: it may be a sign that something needs to be done to improve a situation.

Tanya encouraged us to understand the importance of stability zones. When things are getting difficult, we need to find ways of returning to balance. Some do that through breathing exercises or physical exercise; some by taking a holiday or enjoying a pastime; by prayer or reading, by finding a safe place or relationships...



What does anxiety feel like?

We all need to find and use our own 'Stability Zones'.

Chaplains also discussed the cultural differences in understanding and responding to mental health problems. We had some questions about the intersection between mental health and 'spirits'. Feedback suggests that we have more work to do on this: around cultural issues and skills for chaplains to use to support people.

Tanya asked us to complete an inventory of our significant life events in the past year: according to the Holmes and Rahe Stress scale, many of us chaplains have also had to cope with considerable stress in our own recent lives. We have to look after ourselves too.

☀️ **Have a wonderful summer break!** ☀️

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTARY WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY IN BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL



Seven sessions on Monday evenings, From Sept 23rd 5pm—7pm, at 1 Colmore Row

Topics covered include:
What is Chaplaincy at Work?
Listening skills.
How to work with people on life's spiritual questions
Learning to discern signs of God at work

Course fee £50

Holiday hunger...

School holidays can mean 6 weeks of hunger or poor nutrition for some children—many of whom rely on a free nutritious school dinner as their main hot meal of the day. If you're able to donate, you'll find Foodbank receptacles in major supermarkets - alternatively phone your local Foodbank and see what they need. Visit the Trussell Trust website to find your nearest foodbank..

STAY IN TOUCH

We love hearing your **stories**— the exceptional ones and the more everyday ones. It's great to be able to share these stories. We're very good at 'anonymising' so we can make sure important details and individuals are not identified, if necessary ...

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