

CHAPLAINS AT WORK



supporting the workplace, caring for people

Welcome to our Summer newsletter. We have been through a momentous time; experiences never encountered before in our lifetimes. Through illness and lockdown, Chaplains have continued to connect with workplaces; we have been praying for colleagues and friends. We lament with all those who are now worried about the economic future, and wonder about the new opportunities this crisis has opened up. May God bless you.

Chaplaincy in Virus Times

Peter Sellick writes..

Our Workplace Chaplains have been pleased to see smiles as they return after the lockdown to visiting businesses. They also report a nervousness in staff, wondering about safety and the future. It is a very delicate time.

Overwhelmed, inundated: some Christians writers have compared our recent virus experience to the Biblical accounts of the flood. There are a lot of Bible accounts of people pleading to God for safety from dangerous waters that threaten to destroy. Even if we are now at a stage of heading towards dry ground again, the future looks financially precarious.

So Chaplains have been preparing to meet people who are anxious or slightly traumatised. We have reminded ourselves how people may be when they are bereaved or insecure, and how we can help. We have also been looking at the practical implications of safe and sustainable Chaplaincy visiting, while we still need to be 'Alert' for the virus.

Chaplains are only returning to personal Chaplaincy visiting when they feel it is safe for them, and right for those they might visit. Our guidance for our Chaplains is at www.cigb.org.uk/covid-policies

Initially it was pretty hard for our Chaplains to disconnect themselves from those they have cared for. At a time of major crisis they had to step away from the lives of those they had got to know. When life events threaten to overwhelm, we *normally* stand with people in their difficulties. But we had to take care too.

During lockdown Chaplaincy continued by phone, IT and email. We are using this learning to explore how we will provide Chaplaincy for those businesses that choose to continue home working.

Chaplains themselves have experienced the same ebb and flow of Covid events in their own lives and we have all been experiencing new situations. Thanks to IT we have continued to meet as Teams, and to pray together on a weekly basis.

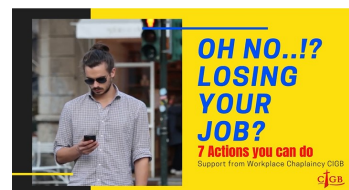
Redundancies have already been announced in some of our Chaplaincy areas: Retailers, Aviation, Arts, Manufacturing. In many cases it is devastating news for businesses that appeared to be thriving only a few weeks ago. Hard work over years is being washed away in an instant. Many people were already struggling with their mental health.

We already support a Job Club: 'Chaplaincy to the Unemployed' will be an area of work that to develop.

If you are stirred by this area of work, you can sign up as a FRIEND or join us in Chaplaincy (page 5).

Redundancy Response

cigb.org.uk/unemployment



The WMCA say that as many as 61,000 people have already lost their jobs across the region.

The TUC estimate that just last week over 8000 redundancies were announced.

Our 'Losing your job' guide has been updated with advice on the formalities, how to register for Universal Credit, and how to make the most of experience, skills and networks.

'Making Redundancy Decisions' reminds managers that they deserve support in these difficult times: sharing feelings with Chaplains can help.

MAKING REDUNDANCY DECISIONS
Support for Managers –
from cigb.org.uk



QUOTABLE QUOTE

“The whole inhabited earth is sacred space in which God lives, breathes, and acts.”

Carter Heyward

Chaplains' AwayDay

It feels like an age ago—and in a sense it is because the last time we gathered ‘in the flesh’ as a group of Chaplains was at our AwayDay in February. Since then the world has changed, but it’s good to look back and remember. Thelma Mitchell writes ...

“As we are gathered ...

The welcome aroma of coffee awaited us on a wet February day. The ancient village church of St. John’s, Berkswell welcomed us with swathes of snowdrops and daffodils, apparently unfazed by the storms, swaying in the breeze.



It was a day of joy, peace, worship, refreshment, encouragement, support and companionship. There were activities if we wanted them or the opportunity to be still, a time of peace. The well-ordered venue was ideal for our day together.

Then those vital times together, ‘networking’ over a super soup and cheese lunch. (Thank you, Val, for all your thoughtfulness and work!) These are the ‘sharing ideas, thoughts and occasional agreement to differ’, moments.

Jigsaw Journey..

The afternoon worship reflected on the theme of fish. After lunch Frances and I did a 100 piece jigsaw together, a very colourful picture of tropical fish. We learned quite a lot of lessons about being a Chaplain through it:

Organization – sorting out the pieces, picture-side up, looking for edges and corners.

Co-operation – working together, thinking as one to achieve a complete and satisfactory end -result.

Perseverance – keeping on going, through the highs and lows, moments of defeat and moments of delight in a blessed job well done.



Oh yes, and definitely not forgetting that it was great fun!

... one with each other.”

Second Spaces

Greg Dengate works in Knowle Tesco and offers Chaplaincy to the local shops. Here he notices the benefit of meeting people in different contexts.



Something worth giving a special mention is the understanding of ‘Second Spaces.’ It seems that we feel more able to approach people when there is more than one place that we recognise them in. One way I’ve done this is by wearing my Scout uniform (along with other Scout Leaders) for various festivals – like St George’s Day. The local community see me in a different role.

I’m also a keen dog walker and often end up down by the canal with Charlie, my Bichon Frise. Now, when I’m at work in Tesco there is a certain distance kept between the shopper and the shop assistant: we wear a badge and so are often called by our name by the customer but it would be considered a bit impolite to ask the customer for their name, unless one knew them very well indeed! However, if I meet a customer walking their dog when I’m walking Charlie we soon talk in a much more informal way and, as two dog walkers, we soon introduce each other by name. Then, next time we meet in-store, our conversation is much more relaxed and informal.

Tesco’s famous saying is ‘Every Little Helps’. As Chaplains we can make good conversations more possible if we can find Second Spaces and inhabit them. People understand us more fully if they see us in different roles. It takes a bit more effort—whether that be a dog walk on a cold morning or wearing my on the best Scout uniform on St George’s Day!



One of the new initiatives in Knowle has been a Youth Café. I was pleased to be invited to attend the opening ceremony.

This has become a safe ‘Second Space’ for young people to get to know each other - and it has brought benefits to Tesco too: parents come shopping to wait out of sight between the drop-off and pick up of their teenagers at the Café! And that is another contact for me too!

**QUOTABLE-
QUOTE**

“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Black Lives Matter

Pat Saunders, of the Solihull Town Centre Chaplaincy team, shares some thoughts:

“This is my personal reflection on the Black Lives Matter Campaign; it may not be the view of all black people.



I’ve been on this planet for almost 60 years and my earliest recollection of racism was as a small child; it was directed at me by a white adult old enough to be my Grandmother. I was born in Birmingham and have lived here all my life.

In the area I grew up in there were only a few black families, but all of us children got along. Throughout my early teens, during my college years and early working life, the racism I faced was overt. I was always successful at being short listed. When being called for an interview, appropriately dressed, qualifications in hand, I was often informed the post had already been filled, without having an interview.

Unfortunately, all of my life my experience of racism has been sometimes overt and sometimes subtle, it’s always present. I refuse to list the names I have been called along the way. One day I was having a conversation with a colleague who I’d worked with for many years; she didn’t share my view and she told me to go back to where I came from. (Yardley!)

The importance of Black Lives Matters is not just at the forefront since the untimely death of George Floyd, but we have faced centuries of injustice because of the colour of our skin. In education, employment, housing, in our churches, government policies, healthcare - in fact all areas of society.

It is essential that we keep the dialogue going even when the protests/demonstrations come to an end. Thank you to our true friends who have stood with us and are willing to make a stand for a much-needed change to how black people are treated every single day across the globe.

I’ve worked in education for almost forty years; early in my career I was introduced to the ‘Blue eyes/ brown eyes Anti-Racism exercise’ by Jane Elliott. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/class-divided/>

It changed my view of all people. Racism denies Black People their Human Rights. (Article 14 Protection from Discrimination.)



A poem by Rev Andrew Wells . It speaks for itself ...

What do I know?

I am white, a professional, middle-aged and middle-class. What do I know?

I am not the young teenage boy stopped and questioned for no discernible reason in the road outside his own house when his friends are all ignored; that was my mixed-race son.

I am white, a professional, middle-aged and middle-class. What do I know?

I am not the woman on the bus who has ‘breed’ screamed at her; that was my wife.

I am white, a professional, middle-aged and middle-class. What do I know?

I am not the university-educated school teacher pulled over in her car and accused of making ‘gun motion signals’ at the police; that was my wife. Yes! That really happened.

I am white, a professional, middle-aged and middle-class. What do I know?

I am not the old man in his 70’s who can hardly walk driving his rust-bucket of a car at less than 40 mph who gets pulled over because ‘he looks like someone else’; that was my Jamaican father-in-law.

I am white, a professional, middle-aged and middle-class. What do I know?

I know that this happens nearly everyday for those who don’t look like me.

I know it has to stop.

Join our FRIENDS OF CIGB to help make a difference, meet like-minded disciples and pay £15 pa in financial assistance towards our work. www.cigb.org.uk/friends



**QUOTABLE
QUOTE**

“In learning to learn again, we can learn of this wisdom and allow our children (and so ourselves) to become the free, whole individuals this good earth has prepared us to be.”

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Finding Faith through Absence

Peter Sellick writes ...

At our annual Commissioning Service back in November, Margaret Holland from Newman University Chaplaincy Department shared some thoughts with us about the Biblical Emmaus story: the resurrected Jesus meeting the bewildered disciples on the road. (We printed Margaret’s sermon notes in our last edition.) In the story, that experience of bewilderment and loss becomes the dynamic of action and return to Jerusalem.

Margaret talked about learning to discern Jesus with us, when at first sight it seems that he is not around. The Bible stories around Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension are all about the tension arising from Jesus being both present and in some way absent at the same time.

We usually teach that the first rule of Chaplaincy is to be Present. Chaplaincy is about going out to a new place on behalf of the church, and making ourselves present there. By ‘pitching our tent’ in a particular context, we learn what the issues are and then try to help people to know how they are a part of what God is doing there.

Once we have established a presence, we develop the pastoring, the praying, and being prophetic. Just as Christians hold so dear to the historical Jesus – he walked, touched and lived among us – we think there is much communication through the power of bodily presence, and touch, voice and sight.

So what meaning does Chaplaincy have when we are restricted from being present? Phone calls and Zoom catch-ups may be very useful, but they do not quite feel like the same thing. Practical support and signposting make a difference, but not many people come pro-actively asking for help.

A very experienced Chaplaincy officer recently suggested that Chaplaincy is a bit like sand in the hand – it can very quickly fall through the gaps and can seem to have gone. Chaplaincy is not at the top of most businesses’ lists as they work out the practicalities of restarting work.

Physical distancing has been an uncomfortable separation for Chaplains in many different areas of work. Care Home Chaplains may not have been able to be present as Covid-19 swept through their elderly people and staff, because of shielding needs or Care Home precautions. Hospital Chaplains may have been restricted in their visiting patterns around the wards. University, college and school Chaplains have been separated from students and staff.



But a Christian point of view is still be able to see meaning in absence. Absence somehow holds the presence: it remembers it. We say that after Jesus’ Ascension, he is both absent and present for evermore. Our belief holds together the emptiness of what is not, with the fullness of what is. In that tension lies the miraculous generator of faith that disturbs us, re-creates us and energises us.

When we celebrate Communion in church we sometimes speak of ‘the grain that was once scattered is now gathered together’. We believe we are forgiven and united whilst knowing that there are people still missing and divisions unresolved.

Church closures and on-line worship have taught Christians a lot about separation. Many have woken up to the reality of those who have always been excluded or separated—people who are disabled, foreign, housebound, different. The Black Lives Matter energy has tapped into this, thank the Lord.

Absence teaches us about presence. Like going to a foreign land and seeing home through different eyes, absence means that we see what we thought was ‘presence’ in a different light. When some normality resumes, how can we make our Chaplaincy presence stronger, broader, truer?

Making sense of an absence probably requires a bit of spiritual work in all of us, even if we say that we are people of no faith. Returning Chaplains report warm welcomes, even from those who seemed to be sceptical about Chaplaincy before.

As Chaplains return to visiting, perhaps we will have the chance to have conversations about how people have manged the absences in their own lives during lockdown. There may be questions about safety and loss, uncertainty and contrast. Maybe some people will have starting wondering about the Presences in their own lives, and Who holds together the depth of our being.

**QUOTABLE-
QUOTE**

“Each place is the right place—the place where I now am can be a sacred space.”

Ravi Ravindra

MEET THE CHAPLAIN

We continue our series in which individual Chaplains have an opportunity to tell us something about themselves and their journey to Chaplaincy. This time it's John Bradley, Team Leader for the National Express Bus Chaplaincy.



In 2010 I had an opportunity of a lifetime - early retirement after 31 years in the Gas Industry, which I took, intending to be a Baptist minister. Despite taking up an appointment in 2011 to a Birmingham Church, things soon went badly wrong and we parted company.

After the disillusionment and soul seeking, I met Peter Sellick, Development Director for CIGB, who invited me to take a Chaplaincy Course. Seeing “which doors would open,” I signed up. The course was excellently led by Peter and Elaine Hutchinson, the Birmingham City Centre Retail Team Leader. Then, in May 2013, totally out of the blue, Peter suggested Bus Chaplaincy: I am still there!

Chaplaincy is about conversations and more about listening than speaking – listening to bus people and to God. It's about guidance. I begin each day praying that both my feet and mouth will be guided; that I meet the people He wants me to meet; and say what He wants me to say. In a typical day I spend an hour at a garage speaking with drivers, engineers, office staff, managers and Trades Union representatives. Occasionally I take a 'round trip' on a bus route, then two hours at bus stops speaking with drivers, inspectors and, in recent Covid-19 times, bus cleaners.

Discussions include sport, politics, passengers, managers, health and bereavement. They can range from the light-hearted to the harrowing. If invited, I talk about faith, seeking to be ready to speak about the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

When I doubt whether Chaplaincy is worth it, I recall one driver with a few problems saying to me:

“Everybody in the garage has told me to speak with you because you will help me.”

Conversations like this confirm the privilege of being in the place God wants me to be.



Do you feel challenged to support Ministry in the Economy at this time?

FRIENDS support us with £15pa Help us to respond in this urgent time



Chaplaincy Training

CIGB runs regular training courses. Course participants come from a wide range of backgrounds. Some have very clear ideas about becoming a volunteer Workplace Chaplain, while others just come to explore.

In this edition of our newsletter Peter Sellick has written a little about the value of Chaplaincy as well as a piece explaining how Chaplains are drawing alongside people picking up their lives again after the ravages of Covid-19.

Chaplains Pat Saunders, Greg Dengate and John Bradley have shared a little bit about their lives and Chaplaincy.

If you have wondered about Workplace Chaplaincy, why not enrol on our next course? peter.sellick@cigb.org.uk

**INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTARY
WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY**



**Seven sessions on Monday evenings,
From September 21st
5pm—7pm**

**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**

*Sessions will be online/in person
depending on distancing rules*

Course fee £50

PLEASE 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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