

Chaplaincy Development Adviser

Report: July to December 2020

Chaplaincy Development Adviser | Being and Doing

At the beginning of the first lockdown, I wondered how I could do my job or fill my time without face-to-face visits, meetings and gatherings. It says something about how much has changed that the same thought did not even occur to me at the start of lockdown2.

Throughout this strange year chaplaincy has remained at the heart of our communities, listening, caring, praying, serving and leading. There has been prophetic and practical service and innovative prayer and reflection, a nurturing of long-standing relationships and a pioneering of new things. The growth of new chaplaincies has slowed, principally because organisational leaders have had overly full-time jobs simply keeping going. However, there are some exciting developments in progress in Multi Academy Trusts, Residential Care Homes, the Courts and elsewhere. The role of Chaplaincy Development has continued to be divided, in roughly equal parts into the development of new projects and new chaplains and the ongoing support, pastoral care and mentoring, and formation of the existing network.

A little of the story of chaplaincy, and some of the role of the Chaplaincy Development Adviser over the last six months is contained in this report.

Healthcare Chaplaincy

- **Royal United Hospitals, Bath and Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton:** It has been a privilege to continue to do occasional chaplaincy shifts, firstly at RUH, Bath and latterly at Musgrove. I have been able to see, at first hand, the awesome work of our hospitals and chaplaincy as a key part of NHS care.

Chaplaincy can sometimes be a bit like the Hogwarts 'Room of Requirement' [Harry Potter] which can be anything that anyone wants it to be.

A school chaplain found himself stripping out a wall of old lockers and installing new ones. In the same week, and in a separate community school, he led a reflection for staff which began with words from Ecclesiastes, 'Meaningless, meaningless, utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless.'

What an uplifting message! Yet the feedback was amazing. The Head Teacher asked the chaplain to do a regular 'Thought' and wrote 'I feel that your presence and words really do make a big difference to us all! I have spoken to several members of staff and they felt exactly the same!'

A nurse said: 'I wouldn't have got through the last few months [the first wave of Covid] without the chaplains. The support they gave the staff and the patients through a very difficult time was amazing.'

- **Residential Care and Nursing Homes:** With the Somerset NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, a group of healthcare chaplains, Anna Chaplaincy [to older people] and local churches we are developing chaplaincy to nursing and residential care homes. We have developed the guidelines and resources for pilot projects, some of which are already starting remotely and some of which will be ready to go as soon as Covid and vaccines permit.

A hospital consultant said: 'The chaplain's main therapeutic 'weapon' is powerlessness.'

A nurse said: 'The chaplains have got this knack of finding you, this inner sense of where you are and when you need them to visit.'

A hospital consultant said: 'If chaplaincy didn't exist, you'd have to invent it pretty fast.'

A hospital consultant said: 'The chaplaincy gift of time and listening is not a luxury. It is as important as sterile conditions in a hospital operating theatre. Time is their infection control measure.'

New Chaplaincies

- We continue to work with two Multi Academy Trusts on appointing chaplains and two other Multi Academy Trusts have had chaplains seconded to them through lockdown, opening up opportunities for the future.
- A chaplain to Ham Hill Country Park is beginning in ministry to the pub, the park, the village and all of the many visitors.
- Discussions on chaplaincy to the courts in Somerset continue positively, we have a growing team and we will be ready to start as soon as Covid permits.
- Discussions continue on the next steps for chaplaincy at Bath Spa University and likewise at the Bridgwater Campus of Bridgwater and Taunton Campus.
- I have helped with the appointment of a new chaplain to Flourish House.

Strategy

- **Chaplaincy Strategy Group:** I have worked as a member of the Chaplaincy Strategy Group on the developing chaplaincy strategy for the diocese and we seek to continue to serve the 95% who have no regular [monthly] contact with a local church and be a larger part of the growing diversity of the church.
- **Discerning Impact, the Chaplaincy Gathering:** As part of the work of strategic advocacy of chaplaincy, I gathered chaplains and especially those who chaplains serve to ask them what impact chaplaincy makes. Their testimonies are contained in a new chaplaincy booklet which is available at www.bathandwells.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Chaplaincy-Covid-Booklet.pdf. Malcolm Brown, head of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England described this booklet as a 'significant contribution' to the wider picture of the ministry of the church through the pandemic. Some of the feedback on the impact of chaplaincy is included in the text boxes in this report. The stories and the experiences of chaplaincy through Covid also formed the **2020 Chaplaincy Gathering**. Like so many similar events, this was on zoom and focused on loss, justice and hope, the impact of chaplaincy through Covid. It was good to welcome chaplains to Devon and the Diocese of Exeter to this Gathering as part of a developing partnership between chaplaincy in the two dioceses.
- **CofE Diocesan Chaplaincy Advisers Gathering:** I have convened and now co-chair a meeting of CofE Diocesan Chaplaincy Advisers. This will enable us to share resources and fellowship. It also gives us a chance be strategic in the development of chaplaincy within our dioceses and beyond. The two national chaplaincy advisers, Malcolm Brown and Garry Neave, are part of the group.

A member of staff at Hinkley on the impact of chaplaincy there.

'There are day to day things we achieve that we would never have made much of if Ewen [the chaplain] hadn't been there. We wouldn't have blessed new building projects or had an Easter service or an Eid meal. These events bring to life our values and make the difference.'

Vocations and Formation

- **Exploring Chaplaincy:** 20 people completed the Exploring Chaplaincy course, which was adapted for zoom. This meant that we could welcome a few people from beyond the diocese, including Exeter, as another part of the partnership between chaplaincy in the two dioceses. I am gradually training up chaplains so that they can lead the course themselves.
- **Pastoral Pandemic and Conflict Transformation:** I have led these two training sessions for the learning and development programme and for IME.
- **Newman University and Centre for Chaplaincy in Education Induction:** We have launched a first national induction for education chaplains. This fills a significant gap in the opportunities for formation for new school and college chaplains. Due to Covid the course has been entirely on-line. It has been good to be part of the development of the course and to be an occasional tutor.
- **Vocations Team:** I have worked with the vocations team for many years. I have forwarded people on to vocations advisers and they have forwarded people to me. Those vocational conversations have continued over the past six months. It is good to formalise this relationship. I am now a Bishop's Examining Chaplain working with those who are discerning a vocation to ordination and to chaplaincy. I will continue to work with anyone discerning a vocation to chaplaincy.
- **Wellington Learning Community, Angels of Hope:** It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be a part of the Wellington Learning Community over the past three years. I have helped to call, train and commission seven new chaplains. They are themselves angels of hope for the church, developing new models of focal ministry and mission with new people in new places. Their latest project is also entitled 'Angels of Hope' a wonderful cross-generational project involving local schools, residential care homes and businesses and organisations across the whole community. Further details are at www.wellyangels.org and at www.bathandwells.org.uk/2020/12/angels-of-hope/

Exploring Chaplaincy Feedback

'Thank you to you for increasing my awareness and helping me to grow spiritually, as I continue on this journey that God has set before me. The openness, sincerity and faith will be a part of my building blocks in going forward – thank you.'

'I've found Exploring Chaplaincy so helpful personally but also empowering in so many ways, I know I shall be able to be a better chaplain for having done the course.'

'Thank you for the Exploring Chaplaincy course, after a long day training can feel a step to far but it has been such a blessing to meet and hear from others and to reflect after each session.'

'I've really enjoyed Exploring Chaplaincy – it's just a shame it's almost over!'

A personal reflection



Alongside the challenges and changes there have been some wonderful times this year. I have felt blessed to live in such a beautiful place and to be a runner. My tendency, when running and working is to look up towards the horizon and beyond, to the 'wider sky' as the Anglesey artist, Kyffin Williams, described it. Yet the detail is also hugely important, worth exploring and very beautiful.

I have sought to be attentive to both the detail and the 'wider sky' in my working life, and in some more

personal and vocational exercises through this year of Covid. I have had a helpful ministerial review. I have had an assessment which has confirmed that I am on the Autistic spectrum, at the Asperger's Syndrome end of the spectrum [I am still learning what this means]. I have also begun to plan a 12-month peer-led course 'Leading Reflectively' which we hope to pilot in 2021.



Conclusion

As I completed this report in the week before Christmas, I heard that, building on the chaplaincy ministry to the Debenhams store in Taunton, Debenhams offices, also in Taunton have also asked for spiritual care for their staff as they face redundancy and the closure of Debenhams. I have also spent time the Wellington team of chaplains and seen how they are going out from their churches into the community and reaching new people in new ways.

Thanks be to God.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Haslam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

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