

Chaplaincy Development Adviser

Report: January to July 2021

Introduction: Chaplaincy headlines of the decade

‘What would be our headlines if newspapers were only published once a decade, or even once a century?’ That question was asked on BBC Radio 4’s ‘More or Less’ on 16.6.21 by Tim Harford, economics journalist and author.

It is four years since I started as Chaplaincy Development Adviser, and just over a decade since I began chairing the Diocesan Chaplaincy Advisory Group. Tim Harford’s question prompted me to reflect on the big pictures and narratives of the past decade of chaplaincy in Somerset alongside some of the detail. I discern a few headlines.

A movement of the Spirit

I don’t pretend to understand God’s timing, but over the past few years there seems to have been something of a movement of God’s Spirit and it has led to what Bishop Peter once described as an ‘explosion of chaplaincy’ in Somerset. Chaplaincy isn’t new. It traces its roots to St Martin of Tours in the fourth century. It has had many incarnations since and it hasn’t always felt understood or accepted. Yet it is growing in breadth and in depth. We have seen this growth in Somerset and in many other places. This is about God, not about us. It is rooted in prayer and faith and in God’s timing and enables new forms of mission and ministry. Chaplaincy

is being alongside the 95% who do not regularly [monthly] visit a place of worship. It is about meeting people where they are, offering to journey alongside them and living and sharing faith, hope and love.



Vulnerability

Amidst the growth, chaplaincy continues to be vulnerable. There is uncertain funding, lack of understanding and loneliness. We continue to be on the periphery. That isn’t always an easy place to be, but it’s a good space.

Advocacy

If there is one thing that we have done to initiate the growing interest in chaplaincy, I believe that it is advocacy. We have got involved and told the story of chaplaincy and its impact in faith and secular contexts.

Formation

Alongside the advocacy we have offered formation. This has come in the form of toolkits for organisational and church leaders to help them understand and establish chaplaincy. It has also taken the form of the ‘Exploring

Chaplaincy' training course that we offer in the diocese as well as other training opportunities that we signpost people to. Finally, we have journeyed with people on their vocational journey as they discern if God is calling them to be a chaplain.

Pastoral

Chaplaincy is often a lonely ministry. It is hugely important to offer pastoral accompaniment to existing chaplains, especially the lead chaplains, and enable support for them.

January to July 2021

In support of these headlines, I offer some of the detail on the first part of 2021.

Chaplaincies that I am particularly working with...

- **Bath Abbey Chaplains:** I have worked with the chaplains on the Abbey floor as they re-start after covid and serve the visitors and pilgrims who come to the Abbey. They have noticed a significant increase in need post-covid and I have offered training to enable them to respond to this.
- **Bath Spa University:** In partnership with the University and Methodist Circuit, we have re-formed and re-funded the chaplaincy for the 2021-22 academic year. It will now be a half-time post, a significant increase on what was available before. I am working with the new Lead Chaplain to develop a team of associate chaplains.
- **Bridgwater Campus of BTC College:** Following a successful year with a part-time, honorary chaplain in post, we are working with the Diocese, the Deanery and the College to fund a paid part-time post. We also have another volunteer who is offering chaplaincy until the details are confirmed.
- **Care Homes and Anna Chaplaincy:** We are continuing to work in partnership with the Somerset NHS End of Life Programme Board on chaplaincy within care homes.
- **Courts:** We have teams for Weston-super-Mare and Taunton Courts. We have delivered training and are nearly ready with all of the processes from our end. We are awaiting a 'go' from the courts. This is largely dependent on covid.
- **Deaf Church and Chaplaincy:** We have got to the point where we are ready to gather with leaders of Deaf Church from across the Diocese and discern next steps.
- **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue:** I have supported the recruitment of new chaplains and will continue to support those who have been appointed.
- **Great Wood and SWYM:** We have raised funding for and appointed a South West Youth Ministries [SWYM] trainee for Great Wood Camp. The trainee will work alongside the Lead Chaplain at Great Wood and at two schools nearby. This is the first time that SWYM have had a chaplaincy placement. We hope that it will be fruitful for our trainee and provide a model for others.
- **Hedgerow Chaplain:** We have commissioned a Hedgerow Chaplain. We think that this is a 'first' and, following a Church Times article, the post has gathered a certain amount of attention. This has opened up some interesting possibilities to explore on pilgrimage, church buildings and care of creation. At the commissioning the chaplain kindly told me that 'It's all your fault.' I will continue to support him in his pioneering ministry.
- **Hinkley:** All continues to go well at Hinkley. The Alpha course was positive. The Hinkley Chaplaincy model has been proposed for Sizewell C in Suffolk. I have also been able to put the chaplain in touch with the newly appointed chaplain at Sellafield in Cumbria.



- **Nailsea Town Centre Chaplaincy:** We have formed an ecumenical team and I have led training for them over the summer. They hope to start their ministry in the autumn.
- **Nomadic Chaplaincy:** We have agreed the principles of the chaplaincy and drafted role descriptions. I have arranged some exploratory meetings in October, after which we will call and train chaplains.
- **Prisons and Probation:** I am developing positive relationships with prison chaplains, especially those near to Somerset. There is also an increasing number of people who go from this Diocese to serve as prison chaplains. The lead chaplain for prisons and probation will speak at the October Chaplaincy Gathering.
- **South West Ambulances:** Discussions on appointing chaplains to SW Ambulances are beginning.
- **Spiritual Care at the end of life:** The Somerset NHS End of Life Programme Board has stated that everyone has a right to spiritual care at the end of life. This is profoundly important and very good news. We now have the challenge of training and resourcing medical and care home staff and faith leaders so that this end of life spiritual care can be offered to all.
- **Wadham School:** Following the resignation of the past chaplain to move to a new post, I am working with the school and churches on a new appointment.
- **Wellsway School:** We have appointed a part-time chaplain to Wellsway School, Keynsham. This is their first chaplaincy.
- **Wellington:** I will continue to support the Wellington Chaplains as the Team Ministry enters a period of change.
- **YMCA:** Following the appointment of a new Director of Development at YMCA Dulverton Group, we have met as YMCA chaplains and planned some ways to develop the team.



Training and Formation

- **Chaplaincy and Covid:** A group of lead Chaplains has continued to meet monthly with Bishop Ruth to reflect on the impact of Covid in the public sector, industry, business and sport.
- **Chaplaincy Gathering:** We have done most of the preparation for the 14th September Chaplaincy Gathering.
- **Chaplaincy Quiet Days:** It was wonderful to hold two in-person Quiet Days for Somerset and Devon Chaplains at Mill House, near Tiverton. We needed to hold two days, back-to-back, because we had so many bookings.
- **CME and IME:** I have led training for a few groups.
- **Exploring Chaplaincy:** I have led two of these 8 session courses on zoom and trained a total of 36 people.
- **PG Cert Tutor:** I have completed a year as a tutor for a chaplain from the diocese who has been doing a PG Cert in Chaplaincy.
- **Vocational and Pastoral:** Vocational and Pastoral conversations continue to be a huge part of my ministry, both for existing chaplains and those exploring chaplaincy.



Personal Training & Formation

- **Holiday:** It was wonderful to be in Wales for two weeks and to have had a slightly quieter summer.
- **Leading Reflectively:** I am convening a new learning community called 'Leading Reflectively'. A small group of us are meeting six times through 2021. At each meeting we pray, one of us leads a teaching session on an aspect of leadership and we do reflective practice together.
- **Safeguarding:** I have completed a specialist safeguarding training course.



National Ministry

- **Centre for Chaplaincy in Education and National Education Chaplaincy Conference:** CCE continues to develop. A major strand of work was the National Conference, which I helped to create and lead.
- **Diocesan Chaplaincy Leads:** I chair this group. We are seeking to share our experience of chaplaincy development and influence the development of the CofE 2020s vision. I am also working with a number of leaders within Church House Westminster on the role of chaplaincy within the 2020s vision.
- **Sharing resources with other dioceses:** I continue to share chaplaincy resources and experience with other dioceses and to learn from them.
- **Vocations Adviser:** I have been asked to be a national vocational adviser for the new Shared Discernment Process for those exploring ordained ministry. I am also part of the vocations team within the diocese and support and advocate for chaplaincy within it.

Diocesan Ministry

- **Diocesan Synod:** I have been re-elected to Diocesan Synod for Sedgemoor Deanery. As Chaplaincy Adviser, I led a presentation on chaplaincy at the July 2021 Synod.
- **Discerning Ministries:** I am now part of the Discerning Ministries group and I am working with two pilot benefices as they seek the next steps.
- **Everyday Faith and Archdeaconry Days:** I am part of the teams working on these.
- **Living in Love and Faith:** I have helped establish the LLF chaplaincy and am one of the chaplains.
- **New Bishop Consultation:** I have gathered views of chaplains and offered them to the Vacancy in See process.
- **Quantock Deanery:** I continue to work with colleagues within Quantock Deanery as their Accompanier.



Conclusion

Writing, as I am, amidst the comparative freedoms of August, it's a challenge to remember and imagine ourselves within the restrictions and darkness of the January lockdown. So much has changed in our world and those changes have been echoed within our chaplaincies. We have needed to constantly adapt and re-imagine, whilst offering continuing spiritual care and leadership. As Covid restrictions eased in the summer some strands of chaplaincy, for instance, in care homes, were able to re-start. Covid has also opened-up new opportunities and Care Homes are once again a relevant example. However, the big picture that I discern is that, whilst covid has changed the way that we do chaplaincy, it hasn't stopped chaplaincy from growing and developing. As another example of this, as I have been completing this report, I have heard from a firefighter who would like to explore if God is calling him to be a chaplain and from a church leader and head teachers seeking support in setting up a multi-school chaplaincy. Such emails and messages are, wonderfully, not unusual.

Thanks be to God.

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