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Keeping the faith

Hinkley Point C Chaplain,
Ewen Huffman

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An interview
with Ewen Huffman

PROFILE

Role

Hinkley Point C Chaplain

Previous roles

Baptist Minister in
Watford, Carshalton
Beeches, Winchester and
Taunton

Education

University of Kent
Theological College

Expert in

Electrical engineering
Electronics research
Pastoral care
Spiritual guidance

It's about looking after the whole person

In conversation with Hinkley Point C Chaplain, Ewen Huffman

Thanks for talking to Connect, Ewen. Tell us about your background. Have you been part of the church for long?

I was born not far from Hinkley Point, so I'm back where I started. We moved east to Bishop's Stortford and later on I studied electrical engineering at the University of Kent. That's where I found my faith, so that was the turning point for me. In 1987, after a few years in electronics research, I went to theological college and since then I've led churches in Bushey near Watford, Carshalton Beeches near Sutton, and

Winchester. Then I moved to Creech St. Michael Baptist Church near Taunton, and that was my post before I ended up here at Hinkley Point C.

Why did the project feel the need to appoint a chaplain?

HPC has a desire to care for the whole person. We've got Hinkley Health here where you can go for your physical needs and we have over 300 Mental Health First Aiders, helping with mental wellbeing. However, people are spiritual beings as well and the project recognised that those with faith often

have a good sense of overall wellbeing. They saw a need for a chaplain and appointed me. I think it's very pioneering and it's gone astonishingly well so far.

What does a typical day on site look like?

I'll give you my day yesterday: Just as I was leaving home I got a message to contact someone who's been working on site. They are isolating, again, and it's really affecting their headspace. So as soon as I arrived at work I phoned them for a chat. At midday I led prayers with the Christian

community. Some people dial in or, if they're in the north building bubble, we meet physically. I then had two meetings - one to speak with someone who has some big spiritual questions, the other to help a worker with their wellbeing. Later I dialled into a Mental Health First Aider call to check up on how everyone is and had an online planning meeting with the two leaders of our Muslim community, to plan the Eid meal in June.

As I'm employed by the Diocese of Bath and Wells, I then had a chaplaincy catch up for that. I finished my day with some online training followed by another pastoral call, and then down to the Hinkley campus for a drop-in in the evening. That was a busier day than normal!

Tell us more about the Christian group you started.

I've simply gathered together those on site who profess to be Christians. I'd say a small number have re-found their faith and some have found their Christian faith for the first time. We pray three times a week using old Celtic liturgy from the 3rd Century, along with our own prayers. We pray for the needs of people on site and, always, for our leaders. It's short and sharp and lasts for about 12 minutes. It's a lovely, supportive and growing group of people.

What about workers on site from other faiths and denominations?

There's a Muslim group led by two colleagues and in my early days we really gelled because at that point I hadn't identified many Christians on site and it was nice to be with people who actually believed something. I would say I'm a rallying point for people of other traditions - a chaplain to all faiths and none. I understand and respect other people's beliefs.

Did you know?

Ewen is the first salaried chaplain to the UK construction industry. A pioneering appointment!

Interestingly, Baptists were the first people in the 17th Century to fight for religious freedom, and I'm an ordained Baptist Minister employed by the Church of England. What we work on at HPC is a principle of understanding and mutual respect and I hope we can increase dialogue with members of other faiths so we can understand one another better.

How does it feel being part of the biggest construction site in Europe?

I love it because, really, I'm a geek! I'm back doing what I did when I was 24 - caring for people in the workplace. I feel at home in this environment because I'm an engineer and the novelty of this place still hasn't worn off. It thrills me when I get my PPE on and I go out on site. I understand some of the things they're talking about and the work they're doing and I love it!

How has the pandemic impacted the work you do on site?

I think it accelerated the process of acceptance to having a chaplain on site. I joined just as Covid-19 started and most people on site agree that it really was the right time to appoint a chaplain. I've been staggered at how people on site have risen to the challenge in a safe and professional way.

In 2019 I walked the 500 miles of the Camino de Santiago in Spain and I spent



“I’m a one-man ecumenical movement. I’m a Baptist Minister seconded to the Anglican Church and paid for by Hinkley Point C.”

much of the time praying about what I should do next in my career. When I came back, I received an email from my regional minister telling me about the chaplaincy post at Hinkley Point C. So it somehow dovetailed in with my timetable and did exactly the same with this pandemic - and it's worked

so well. It was the right thing for me to do.

How do you look after your own wellbeing in these times?

My faith is the major source of my strength, as are my wife and two daughters. I love music and I exercise by running or cycling. When I'm really under stress, I turn to weightlifting.

What would your three desert island discs be?

“The Long and Winding Road” by the Beatles and “Lovely Day” by Bill Withers. I would also say the Boys Town Gang version of “Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You”.

What TV dramas have kept you going during the latest lockdown?

The Queen's Gambit, The Woods and Modern Family.

