

# CHAPLAINS AT WORK



June 2016

Welcome to our latest newsletter. It's been a long time coming—mainly because we've been very busy with lots going on within the city and round the Chaplaincies. Here are a few stories and reports from Chaplains together with two significant future events: the Autumn Chaplaincy Training Course and our Annual Commissioning Service. Enjoy the summer ... we'll see you in September!

## Chaplains offer a sense of future ... staying on after closure of the Pavilions shopping centre

The Pavilions Shopping centre in Birmingham City Centre closed in May after 29 years of business. Elaine Hutchinson, and previously Denise Morgan, had been visiting there as Chaplains for a number of years, and accompanied many of the staff through the painful process of closure.



As the stores and the food court closed, employees were losing friends, as well as income and purpose. Some of the staff had been working there for over 25 years. As the CIGB Annual Meeting discussed (see p4), retailing is going through major change.

Some of the Pavilions staff were moving on to other jobs; some had not been able to find anything. Some of them reported having to take less stable work contracts in new jobs.

In the Food Court and last remaining shops, staff were really keen that the fixtures and fittings went to good causes, rather than just landfill, and spoke to Elaine. She sent out the message, and for the last couple of days the place was "positively buzzing with people who were taking advantage of the free items".

"Catholic Nuns were taking things abroad; new café owners were picking up equipment; new churches took chairs; homeless shelters and Islamic relief found materials for refugees".

"It was so lovely to see. The staff at the Pavilions said that even though this week was very sad and difficult, it was made better, because the items were going to good homes".



Elaine is now in contact with contractors who are doing the conversion of the space into a large Primark store, and is hoping to carry on the tradition with Chaplaincy to the building site. Chaplaincy reminds people of a hopeful God who can still see a future when things get tough.

Workplace chaplaincy in Birmingham City Centre



## On the water ... Chaplains pulling up in a boat alongside you ...

A team of Waterways Chaplains have been out in force in Birmingham this summer. The Chaplaincy Team brought a couple of boats with them, and cruised up and down the canals getting to know boaters, as well as walking the tow paths, speaking in churches and meeting staff at the Canal and River Trust.



Waterways chaplains Andy Taylor and Richard Alford

One boat they spotted was flying the Afghan national flag, and displaying the Christian 'Fish' logo: it turned out that the boater was an ex-RAF officer who had lost friends in the Afghan conflict, and was flying the flag in their memory. He appreciated the chance to talk.

Continued ...

**The Referendum** result shows a significant disconnect between leadership of the business community and the general population ...There may be some benefit to the economy from depreciation of sterling. ...but much will depend on what EU exit agreement is finally realised, and the outcomes (with EU funding removed) of fiscal renegotiations for Scotland and the regions: which could have a deleterious impact for the West Midlands ... Consultations on 'Exit negotiations' should include Midlands representation, and input from a 'Manufacturing Sector Task Group' ...  
 precis of West Midlands Economic Forum



A church in Coven, Staffordshire, signed a Covenant with the Waterways

Chaplaincy. As the boats were moored up at Cambrian Wharf, just behind the ICC, the Chaplains used the opportunity to make contact with the City Church, and speak at their Sunday worship.

BBC WM were also interested in what the chaplains were up to: Mark Chesters, the lead Chaplain based in St Albans, gave them a couple of radio interviews. Peter Sellick, CIGB, popped down to meet them as well.

Richard Alford, the resident West Midlands Chaplain, befriends local boaters and helps tackle the isolation and deprivation that some face. Boaters experience the usual ups and downs of life and appreciate a supportive colleague. Richard may crew with them as they travel around; sometimes he helps them to sort out benefits or health problems. He liaises with staff at the Canal and River Trust, if there is a significant issue. He also meets anglers, walkers, and staff in shops and cafes and provides a listening ear and Christian identity.

Richard is always keen to find more volunteer Chaplains to work with him. National Waterways Chaplaincy is formally a programme of workplace Chaplaincy in St Albans ('Workplace Matters'), but they work in partnership with CIGB and other Workplace Chaplaincy teams in the West Midlands.

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 ☆ **A date for your diary ...** ☆  
 ☆ **CIGB** ☆  
 ☆ **Annual Commissioning Service of** ☆  
 ☆ **new Workplace Chaplains** ☆  
 ☆ **Sunday 20th November at 3 pm** ☆  
 ☆ **Details of venue & Speakers to follow** ☆  
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In response to recent attacks and tension, the region's faiths, humanists, public sector and businesses are calling on us to Love Your Neighbour' and to take proactive steps to welcome the stranger in our region

**do something kind today**  
 #loveYOUR NEIGHBOUR  
 loveyourneighbour.org

**" ... over the sea to Skye ..."**

This summer sees the departure of Longbridge Construction Chaplain Stephen Plant from Birmingham to the beautiful Isle of Skye.



Stephen has been the Chaplain to the workers on the construction sites at Longbridge since the regeneration of the former Austin site began 5 years ago. Stephen is also a founder member of

'God's Heart for Longbridge', the organisation formed of local churches who have met, and continue to meet together regularly to pray and to discern what God's heart might be for the regenerated Longbridge.

Last year Stephen was honoured for his work in the community. He's pictured here standing next to the Foundation Plaque for Longbridge Village on which his name is inscribed together with the words 'Chaplain to



the Longbridge Development'. Stephen holds an inscribed trowel which was presented to him when the plaque was unveiled.

**What next??**

Stephen and his wife Angi are moving to Skye and hope to open a Bed and Breakfast business sometime in the future... oh, and he's already been asked to preach at a local church! Stephen is also looking to continue his Chaplaincy work in some form so our loss is definitely Skye's gain.

As a group of Chaplains we celebrated Stephen's work with a meal at one of the restaurants in Longbridge. Now a thriving business, Stephen remembers it when the site was just mud!



Stephen, we pray that your move will be straightforward; that God will bless you in this new venture, and that you will be as much a blessing and an inspiration to the people of Skye as you have been to us in the West Midlands.

**QUOTABLE-  
QUOTE**

“Safeguarding the rights of others is the most noble and beautiful end of a human being.”

Kahlil Gibran

**Safeguarding Training**



Safeguarding is at the forefront of many of our minds, when we meet vulnerable people. Sue Holder, Birmingham Methodist District Safeguarding Officer, helped us think through our practices

Around 20 Chaplains spent a day with Sue as she raised our awareness of all the different types of abuse, and, by small-group discussions of different scenarios, enabled us to think through how we might recognise and respond to signs of abuse.

One issue we discussed is around confidentiality: how, what and when to report—which might mean having to break the confidentiality of our Chaplaincy.

In our role as Workplace Chaplains, we occasionally encounter people who tell us about instances of historical or domestic abuse which have made them feel vulnerable. Some of our Chaplains encounter children, young people, and adults who are vulnerable. Sue’s training also opened our eyes to instances in our own lives or those of family and friends which may have made us feel angry and vulnerable because they are a type of abuse.

We’ve all had a go at doing a Risk Assessment for CIGB, and Sue’s training also reminded us about our own safety: how we can safeguard ourselves and others physically and emotionally as we go about our Chaplaincy work.

It was good to share lunch together and after the afternoon session we all left with new tools for our Chaplaincy “toolboxes”, and excellent notes for future reference.



**Interested in Workplace Chaplaincy?**

**CIGB's next Training Course will take place from 5–7pm Mondays for 6 weeks  
Start date: Monday 10th October  
Cost: £20**

CIGB has teams of voluntary Chaplains to businesses and organisations across Birmingham and Solihull, with about 50 volunteers altogether. We have vacancies for more volunteer Chaplains and are developing new Chaplaincy areas. Joining the course is not a commitment. Our training courses tend to fill up quickly. For more information please visit

[www.cigb.org.uk/about-us/training-courses/](http://www.cigb.org.uk/about-us/training-courses/)

Or email [peter.sellick@cigb.org.uk](mailto:peter.sellick@cigb.org.uk)

**“Christian Chaplains in a Multi-faith Workplace”**

John Bradley writes ...



On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June a small group of CIGB Chaplains had an enlightening and enjoyable day finding out about some of the other faith groups we encounter in our Chaplaincies.

The day was led by Ruth Tetlow who is the Co-ordinator of the Faith Encounter Programme. This programme trains members of various faith groups to receive visits to their place of worship from other faith members: how best to interpret and explain their faith to others.

We learnt a little bit about Hindus and Sikhs from two short DVDs, and about Islam and workplace faith issues from Makhdoom Chishti (one of trustees at Birmingham Central Mosque). For me, one of the most useful parts of the day was the opportunity to discuss, in small groups, our own experiences and the implications for us as Chaplains.

Personally I learned that we can too easily assume things about other faiths based on what we think we have seen and heard. For instance, some faiths strongly maintain that there is only one God, even when their religious artwork includes a variety of images.

Ruth asked us to think about ‘the Golden Rule’ and prayers for peace, which have similarities in different faiths.

All in all a brilliant day for which I would particularly like to thank Ruth for her input, Peter and Val who arranged the day, and to Makhdoom who very kindly came to speak to us on the first day of Ramadan.

Don't forget the new Faith Gallery at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery which gives people a chance to explore how different faiths have influenced and shaped the city. Entrance is free and the exhibition focuses on the six main faith groups in Birmingham.



**QUOTABLE  
QUOTE**

“We aim to show respect and courtesy at all times and to all people; respecting other people’s freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions; learning to understand what others actually believe and value and letting them express this in their own terms... “

Taken from the website of Workplace Chaplaincy Scotland

**CIGB Annual Meeting: Retailing Re-ordered?**

CIGB’s Annual Public Meeting took place on Monday May 9th in the Foundry Restaurant at the Barclaycard Arena (formerly known as the NIA). Ann Polson, a member of the Solihull Town Centre Chaplaincy, reports:



“After a lengthy walk from the station we were ready to appreciate the wonderful view over the city and enjoy the delicious refreshments before the formal meeting started.

The Deputy Lord Mayor of Birmingham and the Mayor of Solihull greeted us with some positive and affirming comments about our Chaplaincy work before we settled down to listen to the speakers for the evening.

Alan Hawkins from the British Independent Retailers Association (BIRA) talked to us about how BIRA helped and supported over 5000 small retail businesses, and advocated on some of the challenges facing them— including Rates, Planning, Parking, the Living Wage...and the Weather!

**“Without the High St, there will be no soul to the centre”**

Alan said that viable High Streets were integral to communities, and that authorities should be careful in managing them. For instance Amazon’s businesses pay only ‘warehouse’ rates rather than High St Retail rates: this was not fair. Business owners are willing to pay the living wage but may well have to reduce the hours their staff work to afford the increase in their salaries. Local authorities were making parking in town centres harder and expensive. His advice to shops was to focus on relationships and a quality offer.

David Darby, store manager for Dorothy Perkins in Kings Heath and Chair of the local BID group, spoke about the impact of the Internet on local stores. He said that the Arcadia Group were up-beat about the possibilities.

**“The UK already leads the world in internet shopping.. shops are in a decade of change”**

Some businesses are badly affected, losing much of their income, whilst others embrace the use of ‘click and collect’ shopping which encourages people to make on the spot purchases while collecting their pre ordered items. Some shops are becoming show rooms: we then search the internet for the cheapest price.



David Darby, Dorothy Perkins Manager, Kings Heath

We were all challenged by potential impact of the forces on retail, and returned home with much to think about. We may be in danger of losing the sense of community within our town centres.

The evening was also a valuable opportunity to meet, network and chat with our colleagues.

Our thanks to all the Speakers, and to David Butterworth, Lead Chaplain to the NEC Group, who kindly helped organise the evening. Thanks to the Arena staff who all helped to this a memorable evening.

**LAST WORD**

We love hearing your stories both the exceptional ones and the more everyday ones, and it’s great to be able to share these stories as they are so encouraging. We’re very good at ‘anonymising’ stories so we can make sure important details and individuals are not identified, if necessary ...

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition of “Chaplains at Work”.

**STAY IN TOUCH**

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