

# CHAPLAINS AT WORK



Autumn 2019

supporting the workplace, caring for people

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter. This month we are launching our 'Friends of CIGB' network to draw more people into conversation and support for our work. We also hear more about how Chaplaincy makes a difference..



**We would like CIGB to do much more.**

**Our Chaplaincies are popular: the workplace is a tough place.**

**There are new things we can accomplish with a wider band of supporters and friends.**

We are launching 'FRIENDS OF CIGB'. This is a way of establishing a wider network of people who may not feel that they have the time/calling to be a Chaplain, but would like to support us in our work. FRIENDS OF CIGB will get to know our Chaplains and share in the issues of work, faith and local economy.

This network will inform the wider movement that is engaged in growing an economy in which all people can flourish. With other networks across Birmingham and Solihull - such as Church Action on Tax Justice, Ethical Money Churches, Movement of Christian Workers - we can make a difference.

The FRIENDS OF CIGB group is for people who want to move society towards a fairer, beneficial economy. Our web-page [www.cigb.org.uk/friends](http://www.cigb.org.uk/friends) leads to the signing-up process. FRIENDS OF CIGB will receive special newsletters, and invitations to meet and discuss with our Chaplains.

FRIENDS OF CIGB will make a regular donation towards CIGB, so that CIGB can continue to grow and act. We will be asking for a minimum annual donation of £15.

If you are interested in joining in this movement, please do sign up and become a FRIEND OF CIGB. More than ever, we need to come together, listen to each other and help to make a difference in the Economy.

[www.cigb.org.uk/friends](http://www.cigb.org.uk/friends)

## Chaplaincy Counts

Many of our Chaplains have been noting down the number of conversations they have whilst 'doing' their Chaplaincy work.

We estimate that **CIGB Chaplains have had 4000 significant conversations** with people in workplaces, in the first 6 months of this year.

As well as the 8000 'briefer conversations', these numbers are a small window of the impact that we have with the working people of Birmingham and Solihull.

The 4000 significant occasions represent times when we imagine someone has gone away feeling valued: they have been listened to and respected. "They found Jesus ... both listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46).

Sometimes we are able to gently point people in a new direction and sometimes we contribute to business advice. Chaplains also maintain a prayerful presence and gather people together for events.

Thank you to all the Chaplains who have been completing and returning their record booklets so that we have some statistical data. Not all our Chaplaincies lend themselves to opportunities for longer conversations, and for some it is very hard to count engagements altogether - so numbers vary and Chaplaincies are different. But all make a difference.

No personal details of our conversations are shared outside our Chaplaincies.



**QUOTABLE  
QUOTE**

“It’s not artificial intelligence I’m worried about, it’s human stupidity.”

Neil Jacobstein

**What happens when Robots sin?**

Peter Sellick reflects on the growth of artificial intelligence (AI)



Can a Robot be Sinful? Government Departments around the world now use ‘Deep Learning Artificial Intelligence’ to make decisions about people. Computers learn from their own decisions, successful and erroneous to make ‘better decisions’.

At an AI and Theology Conference this year, I was introduced to software that can be used to read the text messages being shared by a crowd of people to decide whether it is likely that the gathering is likely to develop into a riot or not. Government decisions are being made on the basis of computers making predictions. When mistakes occur (eg Windrush decisions), where is the responsibility laid?

Some of the hard questions face self-driving vehicles: eg in an emergency do you injure your passengers (say, crash into a barrier) or do you run over pedestrians on the road? AI is developing very rapidly: we face new ethical questions.

Tokyo is planning for a fleet of self-driving taxis in time for the Olympic Games next year. The UK is preparing for its first driverless buses in 2021. Supermarkets are in talks to use software that claims to be able to spot shoplifters by their body language and clothing choices. Researchers are working on automated companions for lonely elderly people.

**Up to about 30% of our current working hours could be taken over by technology in the next 10-15 years.**

What do we feel about robots doing work on our behalf? Do we trust machines to make life-changing decisions? What happens when we become emotionally attached to our battery-powered carers? Research with children has found that 94% of children said it was ‘not alright’ to ‘terminate’ a robot dog that they have been playing with and got to know. Will robots have a right to life?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the fastest growing areas of the economy. In most of the workplaces and locations that CIGB Chaplains engage with, there will already be some sort of robotics and AI. Manufacturing has been proudly talking about ‘Cars built by Robots’ for decades: remember the Fiat Strada 1979 advertising?

It is said that there will be more jobs lost though AI, than gained in the next few decades: although some new jobs will be created. Jobs will be affected in different ways. Research into AI is paid for by those with the deepest pockets and the most to gain.

The Royal Society and British Academy warn that AI could lead to even greater socio-economic inequality. Financial AI Technology is where some of the highest salaries are being paid in Birmingham. The benefits of AI are most likely to be for the richest.

**Today’s AI is another step in control over nature** (and could go even further, some worry). C S Lewis wrote, “What we call Man’s power over Nature, turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.” The 2018 House of Lords Report on AI recommended some basic principles for an AI Code to redress some of these imbalances: for common good; fairness; privacy, transparency; in parity with humans.

Our Chaplains in the workplace know people who are moulded by the tools of their work. Technology has always shaped who we are, just as we have shaped those technologies ourselves. We see people using tools for greater productivity at cash-tills or on the shopfloor, in a call-centre or driving a bus, working in a kitchen or deciding loans.



The role of the Chaplain is to help workers to know their God-given humanity in their work circumstances. But we may have been slow in catching up with the implications of AI for workers and people of faith. Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, reflected on the relationship between humans and nature, technology and science. He noted that our moral sense and range of values have not developed at the same pace as our technological advances. So, for instance, we see the current environmental consequences of our actions and feel the difficulty in tempering our excesses.

Chaplains may soon be visiting retailers that are installing software to spot shoplifters: software that will reduce shoplifting and increase wages - but could be culturally biased. Or we may know bus drivers who are worried about losing their jobs to self-driving buses: even if that offers cheaper transport to the poorest members of society. AI is asking questions of our deepest human and faith values.

**QUOTABLE  
QUOTE**

“Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.”

Richard Gillard

**News from around the Chaplaincies:**

Three Chaplains give us an insight into what’s been happening . . .

**Bournville FE College** Chaplains look forward to a new term as Thelma explains: “September, new academic year, new beginnings, new students finding their feet, settling in, making friends – and asking about extra-curricular activities, whether it’s sport, music or advice on all sorts of matters.

The chaplains will be there but we’ll be asking questions! ‘Does God exist? What are the three most important things for life? Can you describe yourself in three words?’ Answers are pinned to the boards. And yes – as well as our new chaplaincy leaflets, sweets will be given out! This is a great opportunity to meet and talk to staff and students, making our presence felt from the offset.”

*“The mercies of the Lord never cease ... they are new every morning. “*



**NEC Group** Chaplain Sharon says it’s hard to stop acting like a Chaplain! :

“Recently I was reminded that we can be Chaplains/ witnesses no matter where we are. I was on my way to Birmingham airport with family and managed through clumsiness to damage my leg rather badly.

I didn’t say anything at time to family but made my way to the First Aid room at the airport (right next to prayer room). The first aider was great - very efficient and reassuring, but told me that he had had to deal with a very distressing situation the week before. As he told me a bit about this I asked if he had spoken to the airport Chaplains. Fortunately he had, and reported that he was greatly comforted by their help .

We talked some more and parted having been able to reassure each other in different ways. It reinforced my opinion then that my/our Chaplaincy is not just workplace but everywhere. I now take each new day as an opportunity to be a Chaplain even if it’s only a brief encounter!”



The 2019 Autumn Chaplaincy Training course is now full! If you, or anyone you know, are interested in becoming a volunteer Workplace Chaplain our next course will be held in Spring 2020.

**In Birmingham’s Open Air Market** Chaplain Iain Frew is concerned:

“The staff at many of the stalls are becoming depressed at how the market is attracting fewer customers and therefore that sales are spiralling downwards. Some traders have started to sell items online although this option is not available to those selling fruit and veg. They are dismayed that some high street retailers can sell pre-packaged items more cheaply than they have to pay for their own stock. Uncertainty about the date of the move from the present market is troubling and some traders have decided to retire”.



Some Chaplains’ career news . . .

Christine McAteer, volunteer Chaplain to National Express West Midlands staff for several years, has been accepted for training for Anglican ordained ministry. Christine begins her training in September.

Ebenezer Asaju, another of our Bus Chaplains, has been appointed as a part-time Hospital Chaplain at Sandwell/ West Birmingham Hospital.



Annual Commissioning Service 2019

Commissioning of New CIGB Chaplains &  
Celebrating Our Ministries

Discovering Jesus on  
the Road..

Guest Speaker Margaret Holland

Margaret teaches the Postgraduate Course in Chaplaincy at Newman University, as well as being their Chaplain.

Sunday November 24th 3pm

At Yardley Wood Baptist Church

Daisy Farm Rd Birmingham, B14 4LS

Our annual service brings our CIGB Chaplains,  
Trustees and Friends to worship together  
as we celebrate our chaplains old and new ...

All Welcome

**QUOTABLE-** Please continue to pray for us, the workplaces we visit and all aspects of working life.  
**QUOTE**

### Giving your Life for your Work?

Peter Sellick reflects on some of the dangers—some invisible ones—faced by people at work.



A memorial with a broken column stands in the grounds of Birmingham Cathedral. It was erected for two young workers who were killed in the building of the city's Town Hall in 1833.

The number of people killed because of work accidents in UK (about 250 per year) is now much lower than it used to be, but there are rising trends of danger among those working 'on the fringes of the economy': in casual work, self-employment and the gig economy.

But by far the biggest cause of workplace-related death is mesothelioma (caused by asbestos). About 2,500 people a year are dying from this— nearly twice the number of people killed in road accidents. The BBC recently reported that 80-90% of schools in Birmingham and Solihull still contain asbestos. The numbers of people suffering from asbestos-related illnesses still rises: there could be up to 10,000 such illnesses in the UK annually by the year 2020.

It is thought likely that injuries to 'gig-economy' workers are likely to be under-reported. Despite the campaigning work by unions and public health workers, the increasing casualisation of work appears to be making work less safe. The 2018-19 figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show that people who are 'self-employed' are twice as likely to be killed in the course of their work than those who are employed. Casual workers may be less likely to report problems because of job insecurity fears.

Only 25% of couriers – on bicycles or vans – believe that their employers cared about their safety. In their research, London University found that de-regulation over the last few years has left self-employed couriers and taxi drivers at an increased risk of exploitation. The Health and Safety Executive has regulations on safety at work, but these don't apply to those whose work takes place on public highways.

Campaigners also question the higher rate of injuries sustained by newly immigrated people.

Last year a coroner instructed an inquest jury to a finding of 'accidental death' of five men killed in 2016 when a wall collapsed at a scrap metal plant in Nechells, Birmingham. The men, originally from Gambia and Senegal, were crushed when a 4m wall collapsed and 460 tonnes of metal fell on top on them in a metal recycling site.

As recycling and waste processing businesses continue to expand, the 2019 HSE figures show that the waste industry remains one of the most dangerous in the UK: with death rates 12 times higher than the average across all industries, and much higher than construction work. Agricultural, forestry and fishing, although traditionally the most dangerous area of work, is now only a little more dangerous than waste processing.

For the last few years, CIGB Chaplains have contributed prayers and reflections for the annual Workers Memorial Day, and Mesothelioma Day. At these events, families tell stories of people injured and killed by carelessness at work. This year I heard a woman talk about how she had contracted mesothelioma just by breathing in asbestos fibres from her dad's work overalls thirty years ago. Every day he would come home from work cutting asbestos board for partitions and hang up his overalls in the hall, where she would be playing as a child. Now she had contracted mesothelioma in the lining of the lungs. She now has a terminal illness because of her dad's work. Asbestos is still being mined and used in Russia.

Memorial events are marked by a lot of anger and frustration. Those who are bereaved by accidents at work feel great anger towards those in places of power who may appear to be responsible. Legal organisational structures and legalities do not often facilitate reconciliation – instead barriers can be erected and communication breaks down.

Memorial services are at least an opportunity for people to tell their personal story and be acknowledged. We can re-tell their stories to remind all of us of dangers and responsibility at work.

#### 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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