

CHAPLAINS AT WORK



Autumn 2021

supporting the workplace, caring for people

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter. There is the usual cornucopia of articles—some long, some shorter, news of future events, news of ongoing projects, and stories from our Chaplains. As the leaves start to blaze with Autumn glory, and the natural world prepares to rest, why not make a lovely hot drink, find a comfy chair and have a good read!

Annual Meeting in a year like no other ...

28th September saw our AGM take place in Solihull URC church. This was a 'hybrid' meeting with some people attending in person and other joining us via Zoom. We were delighted that Cllr Ken Meeson, Mayor of Solihull was able to join us in person. Ann Polson, from the Solihull Chaplaincy, writes ... Steve Faber, Chair of CIGB, opened the meeting by reminding us that Philippians 4: 4 tells us to Celebrate God, revel in Him and trust that He is on our side and that our prayers should be a priority not an act of desperation. There is strength in prayer – and strength in God- don't worry pray! Steve then chaired the AGM, sharing the difficulties the Management Committee face with severely depleted finances and planning for the future of CIGB.

We were all very sad to say farewell to Peter Sellick and Steve thanked everyone who stepped in to cover his work until a new Management Director can be appointed.



In speaking about the Annual Review of CIGB Steve noted that although challenging, Chaplaincy didn't stop. People worked in different ways to support retail, transport and key workers. Online communication, mindfulness

courses and new ways of linking with people developed. Chaplains were needed more than ever and we were all thanked for continuing our frontline ministry during this difficult time.



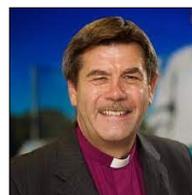
The Mayor, Cllr Ken Meeson was very affirming in his address. Thanking us for coping with our Chaplaincy work during the difficult times of Covid, which affected all of us.

He recognised from his own work experiences how difficult it was to continue without meeting people face-to-face and how many people had to adjust by taking on roles they didn't normally do, creating

stress, anxiety and worry- making the need for Chaplaincy all the greater.

He mentioned a book: "The Lantern Bearers" by Rosemary Sutcliffe, in which a character described himself: "I am the lantern bearer and bring light into the darkness." The Mayor finished by saying that we as Chaplains are lantern bearers and thanked us for the comfort and hope we bring to people.

Sadly, at this point there were some technical problems. It looked as if we might have to go home early and miss hearing the speakers. However, after much stress and some prayers for help, Steve and John Bradley were able to set up radio links and we could hear our speakers even if we couldn't actually see them.



Police Chaplain John Butcher spoke about the opportunity to offer Chaplaincy to the Commonwealth Games. He quoted 1 Corinthians 16:9 "a great door has opened up to us"

After 30 years as a Police Chaplain, he remains awed by how those doors have continued to be opened for us to serve as Chaplains supporting people at work.

The Commonwealth Games are opening another door of opportunity for us. Chaplains are being invited to work alongside the police in a variety of different ways during the Games. New avenues to work alongside the police, either in staff welfare hubs or to shadow their work on the streets are being offered. Interviews and vetting procedures have started to ensure enough appropriate people are ready when the Games begin.

There are already 100 Chaplains who are authorised but there is still room for more – so please get in touch with Val at val.dalton@cigb.org.uk if you know of anyone who may be interested in helping with this.



QUOTABLE QUOTE “ ...But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:24



Our second speaker was Andrew Wileman, Divisional Lead in the Salvation Army’s Anti-trafficking and Modern Slavery unit.

Andrew gave us some very disturbing facts and figures about the number of people who are trafficked and exploited throughout the world: activities which make this the 2nd largest criminal activity globally.

He also described the reality we face in the West Midlands where today people are still being sold, deceived, exploited and abused against their will. This can happen in large suburban areas or small towns and is often difficult to spot as the activities are often ‘hidden in plain sight’- people looking as if they are going about normal activities but in reality, are being manipulated, forced into criminal activities or are made victims where they are unable to leave.

Large sporting events, such as the Commonwealth Games, create a demand for victims of trafficking and exploitation: gang leaders will already be preparing to bring people in, providing visas and official-looking jobs. As Chaplains we need to be alert and aware about what is happening, looking out for people who might be victims of modern slavery: people who seem fearful, frightened or controlled; have no documents or ID; people who have no freedom of movement or look unkempt. If we are suspicious report it!



Andrew also spoke of the need to educate people in our churches and ecumenical groups to be aware of what is happening, using informative films, leaflets and other appropriate material.



A few minutes earlier than expected, Steve Faber closed the meeting with prayer and we all left with a lot to think about, and a lot to be thankful for.

The app “Safe Car Wash” gives information about how to report anything we are suspicious about safely.

HELPING TO END MODERN SLAVERY IN THE HAND CAR WASH INDUSTRY

Download the app now or learn more at: theclarioninitiative.org/safecarwash



If you would like a copy of the Powerpoint slides that Andrew prepared for his talk please contact Val at val.dalton@cigb.org.uk

Dates for your diary

On 6th November there’s an inter-faith event starting at Millennium Point—all details on the flyer below. Please note that this is not a CIGB event. For more information please use the email address at the bottom of the flyer



CIGB Annual Commissioning Service 2021

Our annual Commissioning Service is an occasion when new Chaplains are welcomed to the team; and also gives an opportunity for existing Chaplains to consider the past year, and to re-dedicate themselves to their Chaplaincy work. It’s very important to us because it is one of the few times in the year when we gather to worship together.

This year the service will be held at the parish church of St John the Baptist in Longbridge. The service is on Sunday 21st November at 3pm and will be followed by refreshments at around 4pm. Our guest speaker this year is David McLoughlin, retired (but still working) lecturer at Newman University.

Because of Covid considerations please let Val know if you would like to attend.



Hope to see you there!

**QUOTABLE
QUOTE**

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

Around the Chaplaincies

We have three stories this time from our Chaplains. Firstly, Tanya Arroba, Lead Chaplain at Birmingham airport tells of her involvement in welcoming refugees from Afghanistan ...

Chaplaincy in an unusual situation – the arrival of Afghan refugees at Birmingham Airport

Saturday 28th August is a day that will be forever etched in my memory. That day saw the aftermath of death and the joy of birth, not often parts of an airport Chaplain's experience!

I had been following the news so was aware of what was happening in Afghanistan but the first suggestion I got that it might impact nearer home was an email asking if Chaplaincy could help with providing emotional support for staff as Birmingham Airport were expecting some Afghan refugee flights. I was subsequently asked if the Chaplaincy team had multi-faith Chaplains. We have one Muslim faith adviser on the Chaplaincy team, the airport imam, Dr Aftab Parwaz, who was immediately ready to help. I had already advised on setting up make-shift prayer-rooms in the terminal set aside for the refugees. When Aftab



came in he checked the prayer rooms and led Friday prayers. This was a most moving sight with the travel-stained and weary refugees gathering in the make-shift prayer-room to pray together.

It spoke to me of the power of faith and the role of multi faith Chaplaincy. But more was to come.

At around midnight on Friday 27th we heard that the family of a young woman on a flight to BHX had been killed in the explosions in Kabul. She was travelling unaware of what had happened. At 11.30pm I rang my Muslim colleague and without hesitation he agreed to come in early the following morning to minister to the young woman. The coordination between agencies as her flight landed was remarkable. On landing, she was taken to a private room and met by the imam and a doctor as the news was broken to her.

From there all the formalities were completed in private. Her brothers in London were soon on their way to meet her, along with a family liaison team from the Met. Aftab and I went landside to meet the brothers and take them to the bereavement room, a room set aside for just such an occasion. And then the young woman arrived. That is a scene I will never forget: the grief-stricken face of the young woman as she

Was gently supported forwards. As she walked towards me as I stood guard outside the bereavement room, she passed alongside a queue of people checking in for their holiday flight. That image brought into sharp relief the two sides of the airport that week. The flight to safety alongside a flight to the sun.

The sad news of death was soon followed by the happy news of a birth. On the next flight, which arrived 4 hours later, a baby had been born.



I was so pleased that the Chaplaincy team was able to play just a small part in the amazing operation that the airport mounted to receive the Afghan refugees. It was a life-changing experience and one on which I am still reflecting.

It was indeed Chaplaincy in an unusual situation.



Thelma Mitchell, Lead Chaplain at Bournville College, tells of Chaplaincy in a different setting ...

"I just wanted to share with you an unexpected moment of Chaplaincy. The proprietor of the salon where I have had my nails done for many years came over with her father from Vietnam when she was nine years old. When I was there recently, she spoke to me very quietly. She wanted my advice as a Chaplain, although she was raised as a Buddhist. She knows I'm a Chaplain at Bournville college from my endless chatter about it!

The care services have asked her to devise an end-of-life plan for her father, who is 85 and lives with her and her family. He has a number of care issues, having had a major heart attack. We talked, and I trust and pray that I listened well, and gave her thoughtful and pertinent advice. He is desperate to return to Vietnam, to see it again before he dies. This is not an option as Covid-19 has a stronghold across the country. I suggested that she brought her sisters and brother together with him - he's compos mentis - and talked through the options, particularly about 'Do Not Resuscitate'.

I was so humbled that she chose to talk to me about this matter. In these dry days of Chaplaincy for some of us, it was also very encouraging. I asked her if I could pray for her - she said yes. I have my nails done regularly at the salon and will continue to support this lady as much as I can.



QUOTABLE-QUOTE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.

2 Corinthians 1:3, 4

Chaplain on the buses

John Bradley writes ...



Early in September, John Bradley, our Bus Chaplaincy Team Leader made his regular weekly visit to the Birmingham Central Garage in Digbeth. In one of his first conversations he was told that, a few days previously, one of the drivers, Ghulam Nabi had been killed whilst waiting for a bus near the garage. Since then a number of National Express people have shared with John details of how a car driver had lost control of his vehicle, causing him to mount the kerb, and this had led to Nabi's death. Many of the conversations John had with National Express people reflected on what a lovely man Nabi was, and the great sense of loss that they all shared. John shared this sense of loss, as he had chatted with Nabi on a few occasions. Early that afternoon, John was invited to go with some of Nabi's colleagues, including the garage manager, to the site of the accident, where floral tributes were laid and a time of silence was held.



Driver Nabi with sons Tanveer Ahmed and Safer Ahmed

On the same day, John was also told of another fatal accident that occurred on the A45 involving a bus from Birmingham Central. It would be premature to share details of this accident, but this too prompted a number of conversations with John that day.

both these tragic incidents emphasised the need for a listening ear and a spiritual perspective that a Chaplain can bring in the workplace.

As you may imagine, in the weeks that followed, there were a number of further conversations at the bus stops and other locations where John carries out his Chaplaincy ministry. These tragic incidents raised strong emotions including grief and anger, particularly in the case of Nabi. People found it difficult to understand that such a lovely man should have his life cut short in such a way, and many have shared these emotions with John.

To John, both these tragic incidents emphasised the need for a listening ear and a spiritual perspective that a Chaplain can bring in the workplace. For Chaplains this is a deeply challenging but, at the same time, deeply rewarding, and vital part of our ministry.



Update on Hope for Jobz

Elaine Hutchinson and colleagues share some of their experiences



Finding Hope in these anxious times!
1 Peter 5 verses 6-7 says:

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"

Hopeforjobz, under the umbrella of CIGB, continues to help those who are seeking support with unemployment. The Job Club officially opened in May 2021 and we've continued to be available to anyone who needs help with any aspects of getting back into work.

It has all been a learning curve: sorting out a wireless printer can take a whole session! It's still in its initial stages and we are continuing to raise the awareness of the Job Club.

This ministry wouldn't be able to happen if we didn't have the support of committed volunteers. Dolvis Ferdinand and Pat Saunders are part of the team and share some of their experiences. Dolvis writes ...

"It has only been a few months since the Job Club opened at Carrs Lane: it has been a new initiative for all the volunteer Chaplains. We are a small group but work together extremely well. With such an important service I pray that God will give us the wisdom, knowledge and understanding to continue this work. ... cont'd

"When a client arrives the Chaplains work closely with them, offering a warm and friendly environment."



Dolvis and Sunila ready to greet Job Club clients

**QUOTABLE
QUOTE**

... celebrate God, revel in Him and trust that He is on our side ...

Philippians 4:4

When a client arrives the Chaplains work closely with them, offering a warm and friendly environment. This is certainly a worthwhile project. Clients not only visit us looking for jobs, but also share emotional and personal problems. We do a lot of listening, caring and encouraging! It is good to see the expressions of joy on people's faces following their time with us. I think this is a wonderful service we are providing and hope it will continue to grow in strength."

Pat Saunders shares why she decided to support the Job Club

"... I'm hoping that my experience can encourage others to reframe their thinking and look at all the opportunities that could be available to them."

"I have experienced unemployment due to redundancy, as has my husband. I felt a sense of hopelessness and with the support of family & church members, took the bold step to retrain and went back into full time education. This was not an easy option and I found myself in a classroom environment with students much younger than me. I'm hoping that my experience can encourage others to reframe their thinking and look at all the opportunities that could be available to them. I'm happy to prayerfully journey with those who come to the Job Club looking for support. We have some great resources that we have been trained to use and also signpost where appropriate."



We are in a time when many people are facing uncertainty. A time when many of those who were on furlough now find themselves dealing with redundancy and unemployment. Setting up the Job Club to support people who are facing these challenges couldn't come at a more necessary time. Please continue to pray for those who we are called to support and for those who are dealing with the uncertainty of unemployment.

The Job Club at Carrs Lane is open every Monday from 2pm until 3.30pm.
For more information please visit the website hopeforjobz.org.uk



Other Chaplaincy news

Greg Dengate, colleague and Chaplain to the Tesco store and other retail outlets in Knowle reports that many are still finding large crowds daunting. During lockdown customers have been much more open about sharing their hopes and fears. Staff are finding that they are being asked to multi-task much more which contributes to feelings of stress.

Elaine Hutchinson is busy with preparations for the seasonal Chaplaincy to the Frankfurt German Market



which opens on 4th November. A team of volunteers have been doing some training with Elaine and Birmingham City Council staff who are

responsible for the market have been very appreciative and wanted to be involved with the training.

Some retail outlets in the city centre have asked for Wellbeing sessions to be organised for staff—Elaine will be helping with that. Elsewhere in the city some shops have not re-opened following lockdown; others have not brought staff back after they have been furloughed so the remaining staff are really busy and some are feeling overwhelmed.

Sue Ford reports that the NEC is slowly returning to normal although Resort World is still very quiet.



Covid security is very good at the NEC. Staff in security, administration and maintenance of the grounds have been made redundant.

Rotimi Benjamin reports that the Jericho Foundation is slowly getting back to normal.

Beryl Moppett said that Solihull town centre seems very buoyant following lockdown, although some shops haven't reopened. Some shops in Touchwood have closed leaving empty units ... but it often takes 2—3 months for a unit to change hands and be refitted. The M&S store has now closed and this has left a big hole in the variety of retail in Solihull. There is a concern that this will impact on other businesses. Generally Chaplains have found that retail staff are really pleased to see them again after so long.



QUOTABLE QUOTE

“Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” 1 Chronicles 29: 11 & 14

Occasionally we include stories from people outside CIGB—you may remember reading an amazing account of the effects of Covid-19, written by a Hospital Chaplain colleague, in our Summer newsletter. This time we have another story about the effects of the pandemic, written by the co-ordinator of a Foodbank. Just as some of our Chaplains are involved in the running of Job Clubs, others are faithful volunteers at various Foodbanks across the city and Solihull. Carol, co-ordinator of a Foodbank writes ...

Confessions of a foodbank Volunteer ...



“Since I have been working as a Food Bank co-ordinator I have believed that it is God’s work and that we have been blessed by the people,

churches, mosques and businesses that have supported us. In fact, we have been blessed so richly by the donations we have received which have meant that we have been able to feed our clients and had the financial resources to run the food bank.

I must confess at the beginning of the pandemic I got very upset by the panic-buying that went on which meant a lot of our donations reduced. Then places of worship closed and people were told to work from home, resulting in even fewer donations. We had money to be able to buy stock but there was none to buy – who needed all those tinned tomatoes?



As for loo rolls – I found myself going up to some students in a supermarket who were discussing buying more loo rolls and telling them that we needed them more for the food bank! I became quite

despondent about it all before lockdown and for a while after.

However, God is good, even when we fail to trust in Him. Through the lockdown we have had such an amazing outpouring of generosity that at times it has been overwhelming. This generosity has come in different ways: many more people than we need have volunteered to help; people have made financial donation in lieu of food donations, often giving ‘a bit extra to help’ and the food donations have also started again. Some has come from church members and some from the general public. It has also come in imaginative ways, for example, residents in a local street collecting food after discussing it on their WhatsApp group, with one person offering to collect and bring it in. A local company which usually donates food to us at

Christmas decided to raise money for us during lockdown.

So I would like to offer a heartfelt thanks to our God who provides so abundantly, often in ways we do not expect. At a time when people are struggling in difficult situations I am so grateful that the Food Bank can help in practical ways – but only because of the support of others. I am also very grateful for the volunteers who are giving their time to support our clients: working at the Food Bank, collecting or delivering food, donating food or money and praying for us and our clients. Food Banks would not work without any of you – so thank you to you all!



Last Word

You’ve all heard the news: energy prices on the rise, the £20 addition to Universal Credit being cut, redundancies and the rest. Then there are the Asylum Seekers and Refugees (remember Tanya’s article?) who have no recourse to public funds.

I know that many of you will have donated generously to Harvest Festival events, but as the approaches and Christmas is on the horizon, perhaps you might consider a donation to your local Foodbank too? If you don’t know of one in your area, have a look on the internet. It’s also worth remembering that people don’t just need food: toiletries and other everyday items like washing-up liquid are needed too.

Maybe think about making a phone call to find out what they really need?

PLEASE STAY IN TOUCH
We love hearing your stories— the exceptional ones and the more everyday ones. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition of “Chaplains at Work”.
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