

What is Chaplaincy?

“Chaplains are missionaries, the human face of Christ, the church that has left the building... We can all be involved in chaplaincy.”

Rev. Martyn Atkins – General Secretary Methodist Church in Britain

Chaplains are people who are appointed by the Church to work in all kinds of places outside the normal life of the congregation. There are chaplains in hospitals, workplaces, prisons, the armed forces, shopping centres, rural areas, colleges, universities and schools to name but a few. In all these places chaplains try to show God’s love through offering care and support, and by representing Christian values and beliefs. Chaplains share the great privilege of discovering what God is doing out there – beyond the Church. In our diverse society chaplaincy has to show the greatest sensitivity and respect. Christian chaplains often work in ecumenical teams or alongside colleagues from other faiths.

Chaplaincy and the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church has a long history of chaplaincy work going back to the time of the Wesleys and you will find Methodist Chaplains in some quite surprising places. Chaplaincy schemes may be supported and run by the local Church, the Circuit, the District or the Connexion, but there is always some sense in which the chaplain is “sent” by the Church. Chaplains always work with the support of the Church – they are never alone.

What kind of people are chaplains?

There are many different kinds of Methodist chaplains. Most are volunteers - ordained ministers working full time as chaplains are very much in the minority. A Chaplain could be a visitor at the hospital, part of a team who talk to the staff in the shopping centre or someone who meets with students and staff at the local College.

Chaplains make a difference

So what do I do? Well it’s less a matter of ‘doing’ and more a matter of ‘being’. Just being there in the ups and downs of life [Prison Chaplain]

At a time when fewer people have any kind of meaningful contact with a church it’s a wonderful opportunity to affirm the presence of God in the world and his concern for every aspect of human life. [Retail Chaplain]

The work continues to ensure on behalf of the Church, that all Young People know that Christians do care about them and certainly God does. [Youth Custody Centre Chaplain]

I joined them on a day’s training. They placed me in a full size 747 and set fire to it!... ‘Come and see’ is the invitation by Christ (John 1) to go beyond the walls and discover new life. [Airport Chaplain]

I gradually began to form relationships. It took time to break down the suspicion of paramedics who had not had much experience of chaplains [Ambulance Service Chaplain]

There are tears, there is empathy, there is togetherness across religious divides, there is God. [Prison Chaplain]

Being an army chaplain is a great privilege, to talk to young soldiers, who will tell you things that they would not normally talk to a minister about. [Army Chaplain]

Pairs of chaplains walk round the market and Shopping Centre every Thursday, offering a smile and encouragement. Retailers are now starting to trust and share in conversations with us. [Town Centre Chaplain]

For us, it is a privilege to ‘be there’ and alongside others in their need and openness to God. [University Chaplain]

Chaplaincy is not so much taking God to the front line, but rather disclosing his presence in the toughness of life and living [Police Chaplain]





What Makes a Good Chaplain?

- Chaplains are **pastors**: they need to be able to listen with care and attention and seek to be available to those in need.
- Chaplains are **interpreters**: they try to understand what God is doing in a particular place and to help the people there to understand God.
- Chaplains are **ambassadors**: they represent the Church, and they also report back to the Church about the new insights they have gained.
- Chaplains are **prayers**: they pray for the places where they work and when it is appropriate they pray with the people who are there sometimes creating new forms of worship for their context.
- Chaplains are **midwives**: enabling the birth of awareness of God in the place where they serve.
- Chaplains are **guests** in the institutions they serve, but often work by acting as **hosts** crossing bridges to provide hospitality and welcome to others.



How to Get Involved in Chaplaincy

In this Chaplaincy Pack you will find information about how to get involved in one or more area of chaplaincy. We hope that you will catch the vision for this work in your area.

The **Chaplaincy Everywhere Course** provides a short Biblically based introduction to chaplaincy and can be used by House Groups and Class Meetings or as initial training for those beginning chaplaincy work. Download the course from the Methodist Church Chaplaincy pages.

More Information <http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy>

<http://www.opensourcechaplaincy.org.uk/>