

CHAPLAINS AT WORK



December 2019

Welcome to our December newsletter. Winter is definitely upon us and "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas everywhere you go . . ." Definitely time to pull up a comfy chair, make a hot drink and enjoy catching up with what our Chaplains have been up to.

New Chaplains commissioned!

We welcomed new Chaplains to the team on the afternoon of Sunday 24th November.



Some of our
new Chaplains:
Kettie, Keith,
Marlene &
Sister Loretto

Commissioning Service which took place at Yardley Wood Baptist church, reflected the diverse nature of CIGB. We were wonderfully hosted by members of the church who extended a very warm welcome; and joined by church leaders from several denominations. Trustees, Chaplains and friends of CIGB each took part of the service .

Yardley Wood Baptist Church musicians added the icing to the cake, but the all-important cherry-on-the-top came from our guest speaker, Margaret Holland. Margaret is a tutor for Postgraduate Studies in Chaplaincy at Newman University and is also Chaplain to the university. Her address was so pertinent that (with her permission) we'd like to share it with you.

Margaret Holland compared the life of Chaplaincy with the Emmaus Road story.

The Bible reading was from Luke 24: 13—32, the story called "The Walk to Emmaus." It occurs right after the Easter narrative and it takes place later in the day on Easter Sunday. The location of Emmaus has never been identified with certainty, but it was near the city of first-century Jerusalem, which was smaller than the city is today.

Look up the story in your Bible or online as a reminder...

Here's what Margaret Holland shared:

"The story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus is the story of the two disciples who are getting the heck out of Jerusalem! For this too is part of what is happening. We have two guys (probably guys) who have had enough of all that is happening, are disappointed that their hopes haven't been met; frustrated and probably feeling left down by the events and circumstances of Jesus' arrest, trial and death; maybe even fearing for their own safety. In the words of our contemporary risk registers, getting out of there is the safest and maybe even their sanest option!

Each of us as Christians look to Jesus for many things, not least of which is to model a way of behaving and being with people for us. Here, in this story, Jesus seems to be particularly relevant for those of us in Chaplaincy.

He comes alongside these two dejected disciples—not ahead of them, or even behind but alongside; an equal, a co-traveller, and he hears them out, without interruption, and without condemnation.

When he does join the conversation, it is to offer an alternative narrative, an alternative way of seeing and understanding all that has come to pass. To help these two people to see things with fresh eyes.

And yet even as this happens, and their appreciation of what Jesus is sharing with them develops, they are unable to recognise him. Once again we don't meet any sense of frustration or condemnation in Jesus.

He stays with them, he accepts their invitation to share food and is patient in waiting for the key moment of realisation. Which comes at the breaking of bread and sharing of it. And a moment of return... Luke continues the story by telling us that the two disciples set out for Jerusalem... now ready and even wanting to be back there, to the midst of all the confusion they had run away from.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

If you look for me this Christmas you won't need a special star — I'm no longer just in Bethlelehem, I'm right there where you are. You may not be aware of me amid the celebrations — You'll have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations...

None of the themes of this story are new or unusual to chaplains. Each of you most days and most of the time are taking care to come alongside those you meet. To meet them where they are, and once there, to move at their pace and listen to their story or their frustration or hurt or disappointment or...

Maybe then you in turn share some of your own understanding, and when appropriate, some of your own journey; and even maybe how your faith has helped to get you there. Perhaps you also make to go on, but are held back awhile... Or you do indeed move on and repeat. In doing this you share something of Jesus' ministry to the two disciples who walked that road to Emmaus.

However, there is a danger in thinking this way too much of the time. For while we seek to model Jesus, we/you are not Jesus — sorry!



Us chaplains more often share the traits of the two disciples who need Jesus themselves. We need Jesus to come alongside us, hear our frustrations and hurts and help us to better understand and see more clearly what is happening in such moments. *How often have you wondered what exactly God is up to in the messy situation you are sharing in?*

Indeed we would be lying if we said that everyone welcomes our presence, or understands our motivations and actions or even takes the time to ask and find out more. How many of you have had someone apologise for something they've said or their behaviour, just because of your title as Chaplain?! (In my context I've recently moved office and had staff comment that they would need to behave now that I'm nearby!)

How often has your church wondered what you are up to and what Workplace Chaplains do? (like asking can you bring x number to this church event?).

If your answer to these questions is 'never', you are indeed fortunate. If, however, you share some affinity with these disciples, and possibly some of your frustrations are captured in them, then how do you allow Jesus to come alongside you?

For just as Chaplains seek to be a presence, gently sharing who we are and who God/Jesus is for us in the service of those we encounter across our city's workplaces, so too we as Chaplains need to seek to nourish and create or own spaces for encounter with God.

We too need to make space for Jesus to walk alongside us. How you do this, how you pray and communicate, share your story with God, will differ from person to person, according to your life-story, your traditions and your personality — that's ok, what is important is that you remember, particularly when things are busy to make that time and allow Jesus to have an encounter with you. For me, it is often when things seem good, that I can allow this to slip.

Also I recommend you find and gather from time to time with someone or some people who can help you to understand what is happening in your Chaplaincy: who can offer you fresh eyes, an alternative narrative: the gifts Jesus offers on the road. For each of us in Chaplaincy need to share our stories and from time to time our frustrations.

This commissioning service is symbolic of this need and an example of the support and network that exists for you as CIGB Workplace Chaplains. May it be a space that enables you and your Chaplaincy ministry to flourish.

Finally I would like to leave you with another image that fits with the Emmaus story — what if the disciples, could be seen as someone you encounter as a Workplace Chaplain, and you. You are both sharing all that is happening, as equals.

In this sharing, you find that Jesus comes and accompanies both of you. Together you and that person you are a chaplain with, meet and learn and grow, in recognition of all that God does in our world, with, through us and around us.

Maybe this is the image that allows us to be chaplains, and allows and Jesus to minister to all of us.

Here I'd like to borrow the words of Charles Peguy, from his poem God's Dream, where he imagines God speaking to him, to affirm and encourage you:

"So come now be content, it is my dream you dream, my house you build, my caring you witness, my love you share and this is the heart of the matter."

May your Chaplaincy flourish, may you meet the Lord regularly along the way and may you share God's love, liberally and lavishly with all you encounter.

Thank you for all you do. "

Margaret Holland



QUOTABLE QUOTE

... but if you take a moment from your list of things to do and listen to your heart, you'll find I'm waiting there for you. You're the one I want to be with, you're the reason that I came, And you'll find me in the stillness As I'm whispering your name. Love, Jesus

MEET THE CHAPLAIN

The next Chaplain to come under the spotlight is Alive Snell who has been a Chaplain to Birmingham airport for almost 16 years. Here's her story . . .



I have lived in England many years but am originally from Norway. I came to England to train as a Salvation Army Officer and have led Churches (corps) with my husband for nearly forty years. We started work as Chaplains at

Birmingham Airport in 2004, as well as running a small church. It was a little bit scary to be truthful!

"Before I go to the Airport in the morning I always pray that what I do or say will be to God's honour and glory. "

What do I do, where do I go, how do I approach people? Lots of questions as we had no training in such work. Fortunately we had worked with people all our lives so we soon got into conversations. 15 years have passed and we still enjoy this work. I have had so many blessings through these years and though I go just once a week I still look forward to it.

Before I go to the Airport in the morning I always pray that what I do or say will be to God's honour and glory. I always think of my work as being a bridge between church and those unchurched.

There have been some fun, and some serious conversations over the years. One asked if he was closer to God "up there in an aeroplane than down on the ground", I assured him that God is everywhere!

I had been a Chaplain for just a few months when a young lady poured out her sorrows and frustration to me, both personal and work related; it took me by a huge surprise but I learned there and then just to listen and be there.

Once I was airside loitering with intent when an upset young lady told me she did not want to travel to her home in an Asian country. I was able to take her to a safe people in the Airport. Many people are scared of travelling on their own particularly after a spouse has died, it's good then to reassure them and help out. Some do not speak English and I can look for passengers who are going to the same destination and ask them to make sure the person gets on the right plane.

If I see someone in a wheelchair sitting on their own I stop and have a chat. Shop workers also appreciate a chat with the Chaplain if there is nothing much to do.

People appreciate it when prayers are offered: not many decline. I am glad I can be of practical as well as verbal help to passengers and staff. It's good to catch up with those I have known for many years and follow up with their family news.



The airport Chaplaincy team always takes part in the annual Carol Service at the airport which my husband Bryan arranges. Here I am doing a reading—and my fellow Chaplain Neil playing trombone!

I feel so very blessed by the work that God has allowed me to do. My prayer is that I will have been a blessing to those I have been privileged to meet and greet.



Chaplaincy Catch-up

Four Chaplains give us an insight into what's been happening this term . . .

A Day in the life . . .

Tina Hands, Chaplain to the shops at Olton Hollow:



"At Harvest time I did a "prayer harvest", asking traders for prayer items, while giving them an apple to all 40 of them.

I also went with some questions to ask people, with the idea of doing a business promo/advert in our church mag. The questions were all about small businesses – asking about regular customers, the future of smaller shops, the benefits of small shops to the customer etc. I also asked if there was anything that we, the local church, could pray for. The response from

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world."

C.S. Lewis

traders was amazing! This little survey proved to be a real talking point, with people really opening up about their concerns. I spent much longer than usual on my Chaplaincy visit because conversation was so good!

I feel so encouraged!

As part of our Sunday service we have a slot called 'This time tomorrow' where we invite someone to share what they do on a normal weekday. 2 local shopkeepers are considering coming along to take part in this. This is a great opportunity to engage with people and foster relationships.

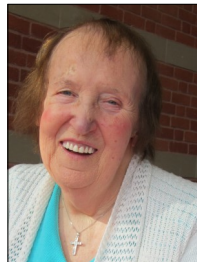
I feel so encouraged that I wanted to share this with you."



Bunfight in the bike shop . . .

Joan Byrne, one of the Longbridge Retail Chaplains:

"I thought I'd share a couple of stories from my Chaplaincy visit one morning. My 'patch' is the Phase 2 shops in Longbridge – Val does the Phase 1 section!



First I spoke to someone in one of the shops. I'd met her before and given her some leaflets.

She was so impressed that she took them home to show her mum! She told me that she was leaving as she had got a job in Haematology – just what she'd always wanted to do. I told her that I would continue to pray for her in her new role and she thanked me.

To another shop where I was able to speak to the manager. I think she enjoys seeing me when I go in. This time we talked about weddings. It was just an ordinary conversation, but very different to the interaction she has with customers and she thanked me when I left.

My last visit of the day was to the bike shop. I've been visiting this shop ever since it opened and the staff are always pleased to see me and I always get a big hug! On this particular morning I had baked them a cake and they were so pleased. They didn't quite fight over the cake but were very eager to try it!

When I got home I thought about how God had really blessed me that morning and I praise Him for what he is doing in the shops in Longbridge. "

Fair for the Freshers at Bournville College

Thelma Mitchell, one of Bournville FE Chaplains:



Noise, music, action! The Fair for the Freshers began with a bang. Those attending like to stroll around and pick up all the freebies. There were lots of stalls, but our offer was most popular: sweets, bookmarks and chocolate – always Cadbury's because it's halal .

But no such thing as a free sweet from the Chaplains! A question or two needed to be answered – the usual 'Describe yourself in three words', is a popular one with sometimes poignant answers; 'What are your three main priorities in life' and 'If God did exist, what would you ask?' sets a few off – usually positively! The answers to the God question usually focus around the problem of suffering or a resounding 'Of course God exists!'

Numbers were a bit down this year, but it was also good to have a presence at the Digbeth campus. But of course the quality of the conversations was deeper and very rewarding – some sharing their faith with us and some pushing against ours.

Towards the end of the Fair, as stalls began to pack up, we had a few minutes to chat to other stall holders, press sweets and bookmarks on them – and receive a few freebies in return! (I never say no to a pen or a notepad!) There was a very good natured, positive atmosphere altogether – the Bournville College Chaplains were glad to be there.



Getting off the bus ... to See, Judge and Act

John Bradley, one of the National Express bus chaplains:

I was invited to a Justice and Peace Assembly organised by the Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese Justice & Peace Commission, and the Columban Missionary Society to talk about Chaplaincy.

Some were surprised that many of the chaplains were 'lay' Christians; and there were questions about Chaplaincy support and training. People were impressed with the work we are doing.

100 delegates were asked to See, Judge and Act. After seeing / hearing the presentations, we gathered to judge what we had seen; and then to consider how we might act. It was a really useful day.



QUOTABLE- QUOTE

"The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation."

J.I. Packer

Remembrance 2019



A poignant memorial, a day of remembrance.

At Bournville College, at 11am the college bell rang and *Last Post and Reveille* was played through the college PA system. There was an awed silence at the end and everyone in the hall stood for the two minutes. The chaplains stood at their memorial table in the main social area, the

principal, assistant principals and head of department also stood with us. Val Dalton had produced Remembrance Day cards for us which we handed out across the college until they ran out! Not only were these appreciated, it gave us an opportunity to engage with those around.

At the City Council, a Memorial Poppy Prayer Tree for Remembrance was set up. Bells are rung through the offices and people hold silence. Later the Chaplains held prayers at the Memorial Tree.

At Sainsburys Longbridge, Val's wall in the staff restaurant had a display of thought-provoking posters remembering those who died but also remembering what it was they fought for.



Many of our Chaplains shared in the sadness with the demise of the Thomas Cook business. Birmingham Airport staff worked hard to try to sort things out.



It was also lovely to see the staff of the former Thomas Cook travel agency in Longbridge when the shop reopened as Hayes Travel. During the administration those staff had given up their own unpaid time to set up in the local Costa to help their former customers with claims for their lost holidays. Thanks to the Thomas cook staff and thanks to Costa for letting them sit in the coffee shop to help customers.

Wishing you a Wonder-full Christmas
and a Joy-full 2020

Engagement with Parliament Workshop

CIGB Chaplain Val Benjamin has already organised one successful workshop this Autumn, and invites you to another one next Spring:

Challenge policymakers and change policies.

6 March 11-2, Rocky Lane Aston B6 5RQ

Led by Clare Mullin, Outreach Officer,
Houses of Parliament

Information on helping you to understand what your rights are in decision making in parliament, and how to get your voice heard. For issues in our work and community, etc: explaining the work and processes of Parliament and how to effectively engage.

"Relevant for all who give guidance:
useful skills for chaplains

35 came in October: lots of enthusiastic feedback.

Book in:

www.eventbrite.com/e/get-involved-get-heard-tickets-83647494909

Join our FRIENDS OF CIGB to receive our dedicated Friends Newsletter (more stories about West Midlands, the Chaplaincy and Economy); for invites to our FRIENDS EVENTS and help support us.



www.cigb.org.uk/friends

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTARY WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY

Our next training course will start on **3 February 2020**.

The seven-session course (cost £50) will be held on Monday early evenings at Colmore Row, Birmingham.

For more info visit cigb.org.uk/training

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 individuals and important details are not identified, if necessary ...

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