

# CHAPLAINS AT WORK



Spring 2022

As I'm compiling this newsletter it's the first day of Spring and there are signs of new life everywhere—crocuses (or should that be croci??), daffodils, blackthorn blossom and birdsong! Some of our Chaplains have worked through the pandemic, some are just starting back now as companies lift their restrictions on visitors. Pull up a chair, make a hot drink and read all about it!

Thelma Mitchell, Lead Chaplain at Bournville College offers a Lenten reflection ...

### That Eternal Eastertide

We know that Easter is not all chocolate eggs, fluffy chicks and cute bunnies. I am struck afresh by the poignant Lenten hymn 'Forty days and Forty nights.' *Forty days* in biblical terms just meant a long time - longer than three days. The Bible, from the days of Moses in the wilderness, often numbers key events in forties. Written by Reverend George Smytten in 1856, the music, *Heinlein*, was composed by Martin Herbst in 1654 as part of a setting for Psalm 130, 'Out of the depths I cry'. It is mournful, haunting, and combines with gospel-based lyrics, demanding a heartfelt response.

*So shall we have peace divine;  
Holier gladness ours shall be;  
Round us too shall angels shine,  
such as ministered to Thee.  
Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,  
ever constant by Thy side,  
that with Thee we may appear,  
at the eternal Eastertide.*



An essential reminder, as life changes yet again, and explodes in confusion and near despair all around, that the brutality of Good Friday will be resurrected in the joy of Easter Day, and one day we will be together in the eternal Eastertide.

As we approach Easter 2022, life within sight of the Holy, our hearts are yet again in turmoil. The horrors which are unfolding in UKRAINE leave us feeling helpless in our anger.

What do we do? We can offer practically with donations, welcoming the strangers in our midst, and, as Chaplains, love and



support them. While we rejoice to see many received into safety, if not home and comfort, in Poland and surrounding countries, it is coupled with an incomprehensible desolation that people of colour are being refused at the borders.

We must persevere in prayer. We know that matters shift in the heavenly realms when people pray. Scripture reminds us that God sees and cares about oppressed people and one day will call evil doers to account.



*Beauty for brokenness,  
hope for despair, Lord in  
the suffering this is our  
prayer.*

A prayer from David Thomas, Christian Aid:

*Lord of all people and all nations, we lift before you the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia, each girl and boy, each woman and man living in fear of what tomorrow may bring. We long for a time you spoke of through your prophet Isaiah, when weapons of war would be beaten into ploughshares, when nations will no longer lift up sword against nation. We cry out to you for peace.*

*Protect those who only desire and deserve to live in security and safety, comfort those who fear for their lives and those of their loved ones. Change the hearts of those set on violence and aggression, fill earthly leaders with great wisdom to find paths to peace. May your peace reign, now and always.*

*We lift this prayer to You, who is able to do more than we can ever ask or imagine, in the name of Christ our Saviour.*



AMEN

**QUOTABLE  
QUOTE**

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Ephesians 12:1-2

**MEET THE CHAPLAIN**

Richard Pidgley, one of the team at Cadbury 6th Form College shares the story of his journey to Chaplaincy at the college ...

Two years ago whilst hosting a local ministers' breakfast I met Chris Milton who shared with me his role as a local sixth form college Chaplain and his desire to create a team that would multiply the positive effects of Chaplaincy in the college community. After going through the relevant and necessary checks to be a college Chaplain I finally got my 'staff' badge and was introduced to the college community by Chris.

As a local church leader I talk about mission, I pray about mission and I inspire others to be involved in mission and yet I'm taken up with so many pastoral duties that I often forget to be involved in mission myself! And that's why I love Chaplaincy as it gets me out of my study or church building and into the community. Chaplaincy makes me intentional in mission, it gives me that opportunity to connect with my community in a positive way which is so rewarding and fruitful.

When I go into the college I represent the Kingdom of God and seek to share God's love by listening to students and staff and by offering help, hope and the inspiration the Gospel gives us. I now do a 'tour of duty' for a few hours each week which often means walking around the campus talking to staff members from those in catering, security, maintenance, admin, teaching and senior management. I've found that the staff are open and talkative as I ask them about their role at college and how they are doing. They appreciate that a Chaplain has taken the time to speak with them, listen to their concerns and challenges and offer support and to pray for them. And then there's the students, hundreds of them, all young adults trying to make their way through the rigours and demands of college. Chatting with the students keeps you on your toes and means you have to be relevant! It's great to hear about their hopes and dreams and have the chance to encourage them and cheer them on - it's also a privilege to be in a position of trust working under the head of safeguarding to offer young people support and advice as they face daunting problems and feel unable to go on.

Yes it's a privilege and honour to serve as a voluntary Chaplain. It's extra work to my already full-on week, and yet it's a great work and is often joyous and rewarding particularly as you walk away from a

meaningful and timely conversation with somebody who was 'divinely scheduled' to meet with you.

At Cadbury sixth form college the Chaplains work as a team, supporting each other and complimenting each other's unique abilities and gifting. We are thrilled to announce since returning after the pandemic lockdowns we have started a weekly staff prayer meeting and a regular session for students to discuss their thoughts on big subjects like 'Is there a God?' And 'Why is there suffering in the world?'

I'm glad that Chris came to that breakfast two years ago and even happier that he invited me to join with him in Chaplaincy.



**2022 Commonwealth Games**

As I write, it's just over 100 days before the start of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and excitement is building across the city!



Many of our CIGB Chaplains with experience in Chaplaincy in a variety of different situations have been vetted by West Midlands Police and have undergone some extra training to prepare them for the opportunity of offering Chaplaincy as and where needed during the Games. I'm sure we'll have lots of stories to relate in the Summer newsletter, so watch this space ...



**SAVE THE DATE**

**CIGB Annual General Meeting**

Tuesday June 14th, 5.30--8.00pm Venue TBC

Speaker: Dr Justin Varney, Director of Public Health for Birmingham.

**QUOTABLE  
QUOTE**

The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are co-workers in God's service

1 Corinthians 3:8—9a

**Around the Chaplaincies**

Two of our Chaplains are delighted that after long months when visitors were not allowed on-site or in-store they can resume their Chaplaincies.

**JLR Castle Bromwich**



Colin Corke is now able to resume his Chaplaincy to the JLR factory in Castle Bromwich. A message was sent out to employees informing them that Colin would once again be available offering support to employees at all levels of the

business whether as a general 'listening ear' or for more pressing matters in life such as relationships, change, bereavement etc.

**Longbridge Retail**

Val Dalton has also resumed her Retail Chaplaincy in Longbridge and writes ...

"I was a bit worried about going back: would I be recognised? Well, that worry was unfounded—a member of staff waved to me as I came up the travelator, and was really pleased that I was back in store. As I walked around my 'patch' I was warmly welcomed and it was good to renew old friendships. I heard about new babies born during the pandemic, and about family bereavements in the worst of circumstances. There had been staff changes too—new people to meet and chat to. Out on the High Street there were new Managers to meet and sadness as I noticed that some businesses had closed. Some conversations were deeper than other, as is always the way, but I was thrilled that people I had formed a relationship with before the pandemic were able to share their stories with me. I discovered that one lady went home from work after my regular weekly visits and told her husband about the wonderful support she had received from me.

Like most of our Chaplains, I always pray before I visit, asking for God to guide me to those He wants me to meet, and for just the right words to say ... or not! I'm going to shamelessly pinch some words from Richard's article on page two: 'It's a great work and is often joyous and rewarding particularly as you walk away from a meaningful and timely conversation with somebody who was 'divinely scheduled' to meet with you.'"



**Solihull Town Centre**

Beryl Moppett reports on Christmas activities at Touchwood and gives an update on the Job Club

**Christmas at Touchwood**

After months of not being able to visit and chat with the shop keepers in the town centre, finally, just before Christmas, the Covid restrictions were lifting and it seemed appropriate to once again resume what has become an annual event, that of giving out mince pies across the town. We also combined this with a Christmas card that in previous years we have delivered in early December on a separate visit.

More planning was required than in the past as we had to take great care to keep the possibility of infection from Covid to a minimum. To this end the pies were bagged up into packs with small numbers in each so that when delivering we didn't have contact with the pies. For a variety of reasons some of the Chaplaincy team were not available to help with the deliveries, but others, sympathetic to our needs stepped up and helped out which was great - including the Area Dean of Yardley and Solihull.



As ever the positive response to our gesture is difficult to express in words. That something so small can mean so much tells how valuable Workplace Chaplaincy can be.

**Job Advice Club Solihull**

As JACS is now under the umbrella of 'Hope for Jobz' we were very pleased over the summer to be in receipt of equipment to help us run the club more effectively. Laptops, a printer and appropriate accessories have enhanced our set-up considerably. We have also widened our sphere of advertising with the result that we have had a number of visitors in recent months. What has surprised us is the people who have responded on impulse to the invitation on the display boards visible from the surrounding roads. We are pleased that we have



**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



been able to help some of the many people now living in Solihull who have come from Hong Kong as well as others from Europe



In our Autumn newsletter Thelma Mitchell told us how her manicurist had opened her heart, knowing that Thelma was a Chaplain and good at listening. Here's an update:

**Grassroots Chaplaincy**

Do you love or hate the expression 'gossiping the gospel'? I'm not a fan but I do find myself nattering about being a Chaplain when I am enjoying the luxury of a manicure! Because of this, nail technician Cathy shared with me recently her concerns for her very sick father, Stan, asking me to pray.



Stan did regain his mental abilities, thanks to the hospital staff, and was able to come home after Christmas when his family took turns to be with him constantly. Stan died peacefully with them around him. They received good support from the Abbott of the Handsworth Buddhist Temple, who knows Cathy from childhood. She also had Catholic schooling, her husband is a Catholic and their local parish priest visited regularly.

Stan's greatest wish was to return to Vietnam before he died, but this was not possible because of Covid. He had arrived as a refugee in the 1960's. Later he brought his family who settled, worked, and are part of the local community.

One of Cathy's sisters returned to Vietnam some years ago and they agreed that he would be buried there. The Abbott and the funeral directors helped them with all the paperwork to fly the body out to Hanoi. Together they followed his Buddhist funeral online. He is buried near where he was born. Cathy's daughter was too distressed to watch the funeral, then watched it little at a time, and was much comforted, which helped Cathy. Please pray for Cathy, her mum and her family.



**Chaplaincy at the NEC Group & wider**

You'll see from his article below that David Butterworth, Lead Chaplain at the NEC Group, has been really busy ...



The inclusion of Chaplaincy at the NEC Group is increasingly deep and authentic. The Executive Board and wider staff really welcome Interfaith Chaplaincy as an intrinsic part of the holistic Wellbeing portfolio for all NEC Group staff and visitors. Whilst the business with its core activities as the UK's premier Events venue was at the eye of the storm through the last two years of Covid, the pastoral care offered to many staff working at home or furloughed and those on various satellite sites stepped up. Wellbeing e-notifications were circulated every 2 weeks and management regularly checked in with staff via personal phone calls and Teams. Messages from Chaplaincy were included in almost everything and we were able to support staff who were hit with tragic news during Covid by mailing them support literature and cards. (with a warm endorsement from the NEC Group CEO).

As ever, we are included in the more recent video updates to staff by being on the NEC Group intranet with a video of me sharing the inclusive nature of Chaplaincy. We are blessed with a number of Volunteers who we can call on but would always welcome more support if you know anyone considering Chaplaincy in their faith outreach and discernment.

More recently too I have been invited to offer a video to Birmingham City Council which is being circulated to HR and managers so they can learn a little of the Christian faith. I was also asked to offer other contacts of other faith leaders to offer similar videos. I was then asked to speak at the Birmingham City Council Executives and Leaders Christmas gathering with their Inclusion team. This was broadcast on social media and the BCC intranet far and wide.

With the Commonwealth Games approaching and the need to support Athlete Villages I was invited to offer a brief video-intro to the Christian Faith to the Commonwealth Games oversight management team. Again with our Interfaith connection around the NEC I was asked to suggest other Faith leaders who could speak into the major Faith positions.



