

Annual Review 2021/2

Welcome to this Annual Review for our 2021 year of Workplace Chaplaincy: a year when once again all of us have been affected by Covid-19 and by Lockdown restrictions, but also a year in which CIGB Workplace Chaplains have been more openly appreciated by those they support.

Steve Faber, CIGB Chair writes:



It is a remarkable achievement and a wonderful testimony to their commitment that our Chaplains have continued to serve despite the pandemic.

As Peter Sellick commented in our Annual review last year, some of Jesus' early disciples were professional fishermen on Galilee, who knew the dangers of sudden storms. They knew how to adapt to keep themselves and others safe, and they knew particularly the power of prayer.

I, with my colleagues on the Management Council, are deeply grateful to our Chaplains—our greatest asset by far. They are on the frontline week in and week out, and even during lockdowns when many workplaces were closed to external visitors they did what they could to stay in touch, and they prayed.

Whilst physical meetings were not possible for long stretches of 2021, many of the Chaplains continued to gather weekly for their virtual "coffee shop" prayer meetings, each providing their own refreshments as they prayed and chatted.

They did manage to meet in person in early June for a day on the canals and a shared lunch. I'm sure we can all identify with that need to reconnect with others in "3-D and glorious technicolor", in a way that video-conferencing can't quite replace.

An enduring message from Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations was one of "thank you for your service." The Queen promised in her first public address that her, "whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service." We don't ask *quite* that level of devotion from our Chaplains when we commission them to their work or when they renew their commitment annually, and yet their devotion to serve sometimes makes me start to wonder...

Someone else to whom we owe an enormous debt

of gratitude is Peter Sellick. Peter's work as Development Director came to an end in the middle of 2021, when he answered a call to serve as Chaplain at a hospital in Northamptonshire. CIGB would be a pale shadow of what we know today were it not for his excellent leadership and service.

The search for a new Development Director continues, and we hope to be able to make a positive announcement very soon. Val Dalton has given sterling service in picking up a number of extra tasks whilst we search for the right candidate, and deep thanks are due to her also.

We also remain deeply grateful to those who support CIGB in other ways. We could not carry out our work without financial backing from businesses and our church denominational partners. We know that the pandemic will have a longer-lasting effect because many have signalled that they will be reducing the amount they are able to give to support Chaplaincy, and some have said that they will have to stop their funding completely. Please join us in prayer for God to unlock more people to join the work and more money to support it.

We are grateful to God and to those who gave that we have weathered our own financial Galilean storm and the charity is on a more secure basis for now, but the challenge lying ahead is great.

Churches and Industry Group **Birmingham—Solihull**

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Chair: Revd Steve Faber
Moderator of URC West Midlands Synod
Presidents: Archbishop of Birmingham,
Bishop of Birmingham and Free Churches Moderator

Registered Charity 511711

From 4th July our new address will be:
Citadel
190 Corporation Street, Birmingham, B4 6QD

Birmingham City Centre Retail



Elaine Hutchinson, Be.friend Birmingham City Centre Retail Chaplaincy Team Leader reflects on the past year

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done". Philippians 4:6 NLT

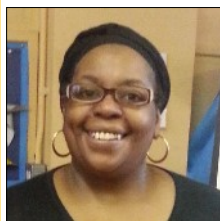
Paul reminds us to tell God what we need, but also to thank him for what he has already done! We continue to be thankful for the work and ministry of Retail Chaplaincy, thankful that we are able to be an intentional listening presence to those who work in the retail sector of the city, thankful that this ministry is still appreciated by those with whom we are called to journey and build relationships.

Lockdown and the pandemic almost feel like a distant memory and within the retail sector there's a sense of getting back to whatever we consider normal, happening as swiftly and as smoothly as possible. However, the impact of these is still being felt, and 'out of sight' doesn't necessarily mean 'out of mind'. People are still wanting to share their encounters, their highs and their lows: Chaplaincy creates a space for sharing and for listening. Coming to terms with the loss of friends and stores isn't easy. Store closures seem to be commonplace, and this has impacted the footfall. Constant construction work in the city centre has affected regular bus routes. This impacts the independent traders and retailers not just the big shopping malls.

It's important to remind ourselves to be thankful as it's easy to become overwhelmed with all the different issues that the retail sector is currently facing.

We were pleased to return to our annual Christmas offering of Punch & Pies - offering mince pies, fairy cakes and non-alcoholic punch to the Bullring Markets. This always goes down a treat with traders, who start asking for it in summer! Our ecumenical partners from St Martins were our taxi service for three days, and with their help everything went smoothly. Christmas cards were given to retailers: you never know the effect that something as simple as giving a card will have on staff. I recall giving a card to a manager who burst into tears saying how thoughtful that we were thinking about them.

It's been a while since I've visited Town and Symphony Hall, but I was part of the performing artists at the Families Together at Christmas event. As their resident poet, I am thankful that I have been asked to read my reflections and poems for the last four years at this event and I am thankful that people are so blessed by them.



"We continue to be thankful for the work and ministry of Retail Chaplaincy, thankful that we are able to be an intentional listening presence to those who work in the retail sector of the city"

My thanks to the committed team of volunteer Chaplains, to those who continue to support this ministry financially and to those who sit on the management committee overseeing this work with prayer and wisdom.

We give God thanks for everyone who continues to support this ministry. We continue to tell God what we need and continue to give thanks for the ministry of Chaplaincy.

Andrew Veitch, Chaplain to the Rag Market, tells of his experience in 2021 and the impact on Market traders.



I was able to return to regular visits during the summer of 2021, after Covid restrictions were lifted, and was generally welcomed back with open arms. However, I was told off by one trader for not being

there to support them during the Lockdown. As the market was closed, I'm not sure what I could have done! Very few traders or customers were wearing masks, so although the building has very high airy roof, the close proximity of customers and traders left me feeling somewhat vulnerable!

The big talking point was that the Council had decided to charge traders 50% of their normal rent during the second Lockdown using the explanation that they could have traded 'online'. Traders with large stalls were charged over £1,000. Unfortunately, there are no long-serving traders left who would be willing to take on the council with a legal challenge to this dreadful situation - so many have paid up, but some have left. So many traders who I regarded as 'friends' have left and it takes time to build up new friendships, but I give thanks that I am able to be there and give support.

Trading levels continue to be very poor with low numbers of customers, and there is an air of despondency, not helped by some traders who have health/family issues. Traders are hoping that the Commonwealth Games will bring in some extra business, especially as some events like Beach Volleyball are taking place in temporary venues on the wholesale market site which has been completely demolished to make way for the new Smithfield Development.

The Smithfield Development scheme is huge and very exciting project for the city, unless you are a market trader. The existing markets will be demolished, and a new market centre will be built as part of the new development. Market traders have been told that they can apply to have stalls in the new market but will be expected to trade for seven days a week. As most of them are single traders, this means they could not consider moving there, as they would have no day off and no time to do their buying.



Christmas Markets and Hope4Jobz, Birmingham

Elaine Hutchinson also heads up the annual Chaplaincy to the Frankfurt Christmas Market. In 2021 there was also an additional Craft Market held in Cathedral Square. Elaine reviews these different opportunities for Retail Chaplaincy ...

Craft Market and Frankfurt Christmas Market Chaplaincy



This year we had the opportunity of visiting the Craft Market, situated in St Philips Cathedral Square and featuring the work of local artisans. There was a great response to the Chaplaincy team from traders, many of whom had not experienced the support of Chaplains before, and felt this was a wonderful idea. It was great to offer Chaplaincy, build new relationships and hear new stories. Many of the businesses were new and had been developed during the Covid Lockdowns. We enjoyed meeting them in December 2021, will pray for the businesses and trade to thrive, boosting the economy in the city, and look forward to renewing friendships in 2022.

Frankfurt Christmas Market

After some uncertainty, Birmingham City Council announced that the Frankfurt Market was going ahead: we were delighted! It was great to be visiting again after the pandemic and the old familiar sights, sounds and smells came flooding back! The market had fewer traders due to Covid regulations but many of them were just as pleased to see us as we were to see them! There were old familiar faces and also new faces for us to be introduced to.

There were significant conversations, and traders shared concerns about being back in the city post-Brexit and told us about the challenges they faced post-Brexit, and, of course, the impact of Covid 19. As Chaplains we were here to listen and to offer something of hope and the love of God.

There was a very special visit from Father Christmas as we celebrated St Nicolas' day on 6th December and traders appreciated the gift of a mini chocolate Santa! All too quickly the hustle and bustle of the Frankfurt Christmas Market ended, and we said out goodbyes. We have offered Chaplaincy to this market for 6 years now, and are grateful for the support of Birmingham City Council, particularly Associate Director Dr. Marion Fleming-Froy who was instrumental in supporting our training sessions and raising the profile of Chaplaincy at the Frankfurt Market.



We had an amazing team in 2021 and I continue to be amazed at how God calls the right people with the right skill and gifts to this particular ministry to people who are visitors to our city.

We're already looking forward to all the busyness of the Christmas Markets in 2022!

Elaine Hutchinson is also involved with Hope4Jobz—a Job Club at Carrs Lane Church set up and run by CIGB Chaplains. Elaine reports on the challenges of the last year.

According to Birmingham.gov Birmingham has the highest claimant unemployment rate (12.5%) amongst the core cities and is well above the UK average (5.3%).

Finding yourself unemployed or dealing with uncertainty about your job can be a huge challenge and scary place to be. As we come out of the pandemic many people find themselves with more and more uncertainty about the future.

Hope4jobz continues to help people in this predicament; people who are looking for employment needing support with their CV, applying for jobs and preparing for interview.

Many of the volunteers are also Chaplains and are used listening and journeying with people seeking support getting back into employment. We understand that Jobcentres can be very daunting to begin with and so we offer a gentler approach for anyone looking for employment, thinking of changing career or seeking volunteer work.

This has been a learning curve and we're still learning. We try to offer a sense of hope and a non-judgemental attitude to those who walk through the door. It is a blessing when someone comes through the door and we're able to help them, whether practically by printing out CVs, calling employers, saving documents etc., to building confidence to go to the next step. We find praying often helps. "Thank you I'm so glad you guys are here" was one person's response.

We are too, and ask that you continue to pray for those who are dealing with unemployment and uncertainty of the future. Finally, I would like to thank the committed team of volunteers who support this work including Dolvis and Sunila, pictured below.



Looking for work?

Supported by  Williamson Fellowship
Chaplaincy
Heart of English

Job Clubs in Birmingham

Solihull

Hope for Jobz

hopeforjobz.org.uk

Support from Experienced Workplace Chaplains

Hope for Jobz

Monday afternoon, Carrs Lane church in Birmingham

Monday morning, Solihull URC, Warwick Road, Solihull

hopeforjobz.org.uk

National Express Bus Chaplaincy

Keeping the city moving...

John Bradley (Bus Chaplaincy Team Leader), and the team have continued to support the National Express staff whenever they could. John writes ...



My review last year concentrated on the Covid-19 pandemic hoping, maybe, that in 2021 we would be able to put all this behind us. In fact, as we are all aware, most of this last year has continued to be affected by the pandemic. The number of bus passengers has gradually recovered;

the roads are busier; there are loads of road works; and there are new restrictions on cars in Birmingham City Centre. National Express staff have adjusted to all this, but there has been a widespread feeling of fatigue, which has increased due to drivers having to self-isolate, and in some cases finding alternative employment, not least in the road freight sector. The positive aspect of this is that our work as Chaplains has

"I reported last year how conscious I was that the Holy Spirit was at work, and I am equally conscious of this today. I know that all the other Bus Chaplains in Birmingham, Coventry, and the Black Country would say the same."

been recognised as never before. My conversations with National Express people continue to be much deeper than pre-Covid. The company acknowledged how much we as Chaplains contribute to the well-being of the workforce by placing a major article about our work on their website, which was also published in some of the local newspapers, and in the company house journal. They even dispatched a photographer to take this picture of me chatting to the Union Chairman and one of the Training Officers, at the garage. This emphasised how much I work with key people in the garage



For the benefit of drivers, engineers and administrative staff. I continue to provide the support of a listening ear, both in the garage and at the bus stops in the City Centre. Many people are not just facing stresses in their working life, but in their families as well, as they face health problems, relationship breakdowns, and bereavement. There are also many lighter moments when, for example, we discuss amusing incidents that happen on the buses. I reported last year how conscious I was that the Holy Spirit was at work, and I am equally conscious of this today. I know that all the other bus Chaplains in Birmingham, Coventry, and the Black Country would say the same.

I leave the last word to National Express Buses Managing Director who writes: *"Our Workplace Chaplains provide an incredibly valuable service. We are increasingly aware of how important everyone's mental health is to their overall well-being, especially after the two years we've all just been through. So our Chaplaincy team, who are completely independent of the company and can offer impartial confidential support with work or personal issues, are a huge part of how we look after our greatest asset - our people."*

Alex French joined the CIGB team in 2021 after moving into Birmingham. Alex visits the bus garage at Acocks Green, and shares some of his experiences ...



It has been wonderful to share the Chaplaincy at Acocks Green garage for the past three months or so. The garage is going through a process of change on many different levels.

There has been change within key management roles along with a whole variety of change at an operational level. In part this change has been reactive, responding to the loss of bus drivers as they leave to drive within the

HGV sector for higher pay. The loss of drivers, and the deficit in the number of available drivers that this has created, has resulted in continued challenge and pressures on the remaining drivers as they try and cover staffing shortages.

The ever-increasing roadworks around the city have made driving much harder in terms of changed routes, moved bus stops and time pressures brought about by traffic congestion. Many Chaplaincy-based conversations have therefore been about the increased difficulty in undertaking the role of a bus driver. The garage on the whole remains a place of laughter although it suffered its own losses through the pandemic.

Birmingham Airport

Tanya Arroba, Lead Chaplain at Birmingham Airport looks back at the challenges faced by staff during 2021.



2021 saw another year of stop and start at the airport, with more lockdowns, furloughs and redundancies causing yet more turmoil amongst the staff at the airport. I was once again laid low by the virus which coincided with being furloughed for the first few months, leaving the Chaplaincy in the capable hands of Bryan and Alive Snell once again. Testing became a part of life, including the arrival of a testing centre in the terminal and a drive-in centre in one of the airport car

"Mask wearing, testing, paperwork and on return possible quarantine combined to make travel more difficult for passengers and infinitely more difficult for staff."

parks. The pressure on staff was increased by the introduction of red, amber and green zones for arrivals. It was hard for staff to keep up with the latest guidance and led to long queues at both check in and arrivals as all paperwork had to be scrupulously checked. Mask wearing, testing, paperwork and on return possible quarantine combined to make travel more difficult for passengers and infinitely more difficult for staff. Airlines withdrew their flights then returned. Shops and bars closed down then reopened. It was a very turbulent year which provided many opportunities for the Chaplains to offer support and a calm presence around the place. The Chaplains returned through the year and as life got busier and the zones were removed the team was pretty well back to strength.

The highlight of the year was the arrival at BHX of the Afghan refugees in August.



Birmingham Airport received most of the incoming refugee flights over a period of just over a week, and what a week it was! The airport recognised the need for prayer rooms and imam support and the Chaplaincy Muslim faith adviser, pictured here leading prayer for the refugees,

was invaluable in supporting the refugees and assisting the imams brought in by Solihull council to provide support around the clock. Receiving the refugees was an amazing operation that involved cooperation not only across the airport community but across several government departments as well as charities such as St Johns Ambulance and the Refugee Council. After a bumpy start it did not take long for the various agencies to find a way of working together. It was challenging to be involved, supporting the volunteers working round the clock as the flights arrived and to see the calm

way people arrived, thankful for reaching safety. It provided a whole new dimension to workplace Chaplaincy.

"It was a very turbulent year which provided many opportunities for the Chaplains to offer support and a calm presence around the place."

As the year drew to a close, optimism returned as we planned to hold the airport Christmas Carol concert. Unfortunately it had to be cancelled at short notice, due to the rise in Covid



numbers. The Chaplaincy team, however, still enjoyed a Christmas meal together, giving thanks for the past year and offering prayers for a more settled year ahead.

As travel restrictions began to be lifted at the beginning of 2022 things started to feel a bit more 'normal' but then we were thrown into another crisis – this time people were arriving from Ukraine following the invasion in February 2022.



Lessons learnt from the arrival of the Afghan refugees in 2021 were put into place as Birmingham welcomed yet more people fleeing from difficult situations. It was a different scenario as the Ukrainians were finding their own way to the UK on scheduled flights.

The good links built up during 2021 between the airport and Solihull Council enabled a Welcome Desk to be set up very quickly. The links established between the airport Chaplaincy and the Council during the Afghan refugee crisis were reinforced as the Chaplaincy team were on hand once more to support both council staff on the Welcome Desk and those arriving. Stephen is pictured waiting to help with new arrivals.

We look forward to the rest of the year in the knowledge that God is truly our strength and our refuge!

With Thanks to our Trustees

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 (As at January 2021)

CIGB Chaplains in Further Education: Cadbury College

CIGB Chaplaincy teams can be found in 2 Further Education Colleges in Birmingham, and the pandemic has affected their work very differently. Chris Milton, Lead Chaplain at Cadbury 6th Form College writes ...

As we emerge, somewhat gingerly from the restrictions relating to the pandemic, and learn to live and adjust to a new normal with Covid, there is little doubt that our children and young people have been the worst affected from the events of the last two years. This coupled with an uncertain and unstable economy, war in Ukraine, the effects of climate change must make the world a very scary and frightening place for children and young people, thus underlining the work of our Chaplaincy teams and making their presence in our schools and colleges all the more important. The team at Cadbury VI form college is now a well-recognised part of college life and it is a privilege for us to serve our students and staff.

There are now four Chaplains serving the staff and students and at least one of us can be found in the college canteen area every Thursday from 10am. We usually put up our pull-up banner as a way of letting everyone know that we are in college. Dave and Richard are pictured with the banner.



We walk around the college, chatting to staff and students, and making ourselves available to the safeguarding team so we can offer extra help and support to students as required. We now have a regular staff prayer-time during the lunch period and this is followed every other week with an open discussion session for the students which we simply call 'Chat'. A different topic is chosen for each session, and we facilitate the discussion – a good opportunity for students to discuss topical issues they are concerned about.

Trips to Birmingham with the students on the soup run, or to the nearby prison have been curtailed due to Covid; but

transportation has still been provided to the football teams; and photographic and art students on local field trips. We hope to reintroduce more of these things when we are able. We also encourage the students to support the local B30 foodbank in Kings Norton. We like to be involved in all aspects of College life: pictured below are Dave, Carmelo (one of the staff) and Chris with a poster designed for Remembrance Day by library assistant Sharon.



Some of the photography students contributed some photos to a website which I host: www.theway.uk.com offering support for addiction. The website is now included in the student handbook.

Julia Stevens, Principal of Cadbury College wrote this about the Chaplaincy team:

"The past two years have been very difficult for many of us, but for our young people it has been a time when they have had some of their key milestones taken away from them.

Young people attend school knowing that at the end they will take GCSE exams and attend a prom – it is a rite of passage, an ending to their school career. They usually come to us with these things completed, with a sense of pride (or sometimes disappointment), with a determination to make the most of this phase in their education. However the past few years have seen students come to us doubting themselves.

In 2020 the start to the academic year had such strict guidelines about social distancing and mixing that we noticed friendship groups did not form as naturally as usual and this impacted upon their confidence. There has also been a huge increase in students with mental health issues around anxiety.

The Cadbury Chaplains have been with us throughout this and provide support, encouragement, a listening ear, and a consistency that is much appreciated by students and staff at the College. They have also opened our students' eyes to others in hardship and show them how they can help. They have supported us at enrolment, during exams, during covid testing, indeed we do not have to ask for help because they always see the need and offer before a request is made.

Our College is a better place because of Chris and all the Chaplains and we are very grateful and proud to have them as part of our support team."

CIGB also has a Chaplaincy Team at Bournville College situated in Longbridge. 2021 has proved to be a difficult year for them as Chaplaincy Team Leader Thelma Mitchell writes ...



2021 was a year of drought for the Bournville College Chaplains. As lockdown ebbed and flowed, extra-curricular and enrichment activities ceased, and most have not resumed to date. Most of the staff and students whom we knew well have moved on.

"Staff ... remain positive about the prospect of our return, and acknowledge a need for us, which is heartening."

However, there have been some encouraging signs since Christmas. Lyn has been able to make three short visits to the reception area and met with two members of staff in person. We worked with them most closely pre-Covid. Their extended roles and additional responsibilities have increased their workload considerably. They also now spend part of their time at other campuses. They both remain positive about the prospect of our return, and acknowledge a need for us, which is heartening.

Lyn, Gillian, Jason and Thelma met up recently in Longbridge to make a plan of action, in the hopes of returning to a physical presence in the autumn. We are ever mindful of those we were able to offer support to, and become friends with, in their often-friendless world and with whom we have now lost touch.

Some of the team are pictured below in happier times



As members of the local church community, we still believe that we have a work to do at Bournville, something positive to contribute, supporting those of all faiths and none, a committed presence. Pray for us!

We recently helped staff a short-term Gallery in Longbridge organised by the God's Heart for Longbridge local churches.

Our mantra is still 'Often deflated, always determined, never defeated!'

Summary income / expenditure 2021

Income	2021	2020
Donations: Birmingham Airport	9,000	9,000
Grant: FCDO Airport	10,000	-
Donations: Workman (Solihull)	2,000	3,000
Donations: Birmingham City Council	2,500	2,500
Donations: National Express	2,000	2,000
United Reformed Church Synod	5,000	5,000
Anglican Diocese	19,890	26,520
Bull St Quakers	500	-
Methodist District	1,200	1,200
Methodist Central Circuit	3,500	3,500
Roman Catholic Archdiocese	1,000	1,000
Heart of England Baptist Assoc.	2,000	1,000
Friends and Church Contributions	1,162	622
Heart of England (HoE) Grant	-	3,000
Govt Furlough /Job Retention Scheme	2,053	-
Total Income	61,805	58,342
Expenditure		
Subscriptions	535	586
Chaplains' Training & Expenses	646	1,508
Office Expenses	512	1,090
Insurance, Accounts Examinaton, Misc	2,635	1,508
Hope for Jobz Expenditure (HoE Grant)	3,000	-
Office Facilities Charge	1,560	3,210
Director Employ Costs & Expenses	20,428	37,134
Other Staff Employ Costs & Expenses	17,348	20,574
Total Expenditure	46,664	65,610
Surplus Income Over Expenditure	<u>15,141</u>	<u>-7,268</u>
Balance of Funds at Year-End	<u>44,395</u>	<u>29,255</u>

The above is a summary of CIGB's Financial Statements for the Year End December 2021 which have been independently examined by Karen Hanlan Independent Examiner Ltd in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and FES102.

The full Statements are available from the Trustees.

We are grateful to all those who financially support our work.

Registered Charity 511711

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We are very grateful for all Donations.
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To donate by BACS please contact
val.dalton@cigb.org.uk

Chaplains at the NEC

David Butterworth praises the way that NEC Group Management have continued to support staff through the pandemic and of wider involvement.

Chaplaincy within the NEC Group has consistently changed alongside the ever-changing world in which we find ourselves. In this significant ever-changing post-Covid world with all its uncertainty there remains hope. A whisper of hope alongside the deep bruises of hurt and 'moral injury' bearing down equally on employers and employees. *But how do Chaplains stay in contact and be accessible?*



Thankfully, the inclusion of Chaplaincy at the NEC Group is increasingly deep and authentic.

The Executive Board and Staff welcome Interfaith Chaplaincy as an intrinsic part of the holistic Wellbeing portfolio. Being 'at the eye of the storm' through the last two years of Covid the pastoral care offered to Staff, working at home or furloughed, stepped-up. Wellbeing e-notifications were circulated every 2 weeks and senior management checked-in with Staff via personal phone calls or video conferencing. The CEO and Executive Board communicated the near destruction of the business and the dreams of Staff and the Live Event industry.

Throughout 2021 we supported Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust by helping source potential Chaplaincy Volunteers of all Faith traditions to support local hospitals in the West Midlands and especially Queen Elizabeth Hospital. During Covid, Carol Wilson (Head of Spirituality @BSMHFT), said *'they needed all the help they could muster as the hospital staff had no more adjectives left to describe the huge and tiring demand placed on all shoulders of all staff team at the QE'*.

The NEC Group Chaplaincy model is recognised by other leading businesses. I have been invited to offer a e-video to Birmingham City Council to be circulated to HR and managers so they can learn a little of the Christian faith. I was also asked to arrange contacts with other Faith traditions/leaders to offer similar videos. I was invited to speak at the Birmingham City Council (BCC) Christmas gathering for Executives and Leaders with their Cabinet Team and Inclusion Team. Following this, the Commonwealth Games Oversight Management approached us with their need to support CWG Athlete Villages. I was again invited to offer an e-introduction to the Christian Faith to this committee and was also able to suggest other Faith tradition leaders who could speak into the other key world Faith positions.



Sue Ford, one of the NEC Group Chaplaincy team, tells us of her experience of 2021 and her hopes for 2022

Autumn 2021 was an exciting time as I finally returned to the NEC!



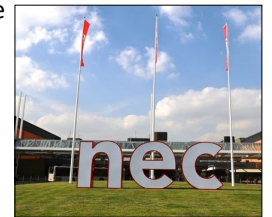
In-person Chaplaincy at the NEC was impossible during the early part of 2021 as the Nightingale hospital, set up in April 2020 still occupied a huge space.

The hospital was officially closed in April 2021, but there were still stringent Covid restrictions in place. Autumn brought a sense that we were slowly returning to normal.

"Most importantly, I was able to speak to the staff - catching up with those who were returning from furlough and meeting new staff who had recently joined the team."

The first show I attended was the Garden Show which was held outside the building. It was quite a different experience. The building was still quite quiet inside, and I missed the hustle and bustle of people visiting the different shows taking place. However, outdoors there were plenty of people about and I spent a few hours talking to the exhibitors and visitors. Most importantly, I was able to speak to the staff – catching up with those who were returning from furlough and meeting new staff who had recently joined the team.

Since then, the number of shows have increased month by month and once again the 'buzz' has returned to the campus. Many of the previous staff team members did not return after the pandemic and new people continue to join on an ongoing basis.



Being a Chaplain at the NEC provides a different experience with every visit. Although I am mostly at the NEC site, which also includes Resort World Arena and Resorts World Shopping Centre, I have also visited the ICC and Utilita Arena on occasions. The footfall in all these places is great and is supported by numerous staff members. It is a privilege to be regarded as part of this team and to be able to provide support and friendship when needed.



Topics of conversation can range from personal joy or sadness to finding the most comfortable shoes for walking around the building or standing on security duty for several hours!

I am looking forward to Summer 2022 as we will also be involved in the Commonwealth Games and working alongside other services and a wider Chaplaincy team.

CIGB Chaplains supporting residents

Longbridge ExtraCare Village

The Village has a team of 'Befrienders' who are trained Chaplains. They engage in various activities and support the elderly residents. Sonia Jackson writes on behalf of the team.



The Chaplaincy team at Longbridge ExtraCare Village works amongst the residents and community under the auspices of God's Heart for Longbridge – a group of local churches who work together. We regularly report to their team and have met together throughout the pandemic via Zoom.

Our team consists of Keith, Marlene, David, Sonia, Irene and Helen. We are all in regular contact with the residents of Longbridge Village. Three of us live here so are in almost daily contact and we look for and find many opportunities to be Christ's presence within the community.

Because of our regular contact with so many people throughout the Village we are well known and often find people seeking us out. We have opportunities to pray for and with people and find that we are genuinely well received. We have taken funerals for loved ones in the village when requested to do so.

"Sometimes these visits are short, sometimes longer: if people want to talk, we are ready to listen."

We visit the residents of the Village when requested but this has been limited in 2021 by the Covid restrictions. Tuesdays and Fridays have been regular days for taking flowers donated by Sainsburys and/or Marks and Spencer to residents. This ensures that we knock on doors about once a month so that everyone has the possibility of seeing a friendly face. Sometimes these visits are short, sometimes longer: if people want to talk, we are ready to listen. We make ourselves available through the many regular activities in the Village including table tennis, knitting, dancing, painting to name but a few.

Another focus of our work is an informal Christian Fellowship on Sunday evenings held in The Bistro in the Village. We had to have a few breaks from this during Covid, but the pastoral care associated with this group of people has gone on throughout 2021 and we are now meeting together again on a regular basis. During Spring 2021 our numbers were restricted to 30 in the space given to us, but as restrictions were gradually lifted numbers increased and just before Christmas around 40 people met together. This fellowship is open to all residents, and we offer a separate ecumenical communion service once a month especially for those who can't attend their own Churches. The fellowship is attended by many who do not regularly go to a Church, but come to join in worship, prayer, a biblical meditation, and a time for sharing together

their life difficulties and joys. There is a sense of peace and joy in our gathering together and we see signs of deepening faith or a return to faith in Christ in several our group. During 2021 another pastoral couple moved into the Village and they have been a great support and encouragement.

Easter 2022 gave us an opportunity to engage with our local community. Two projects included a pop-up Gallery of Art Work giving us opportunities to engage with people on our High Street. I'm pictured here with Sue, one of the volunteer helpers. The second was to plant an Easter Garden in the Central area of Longbridge, inviting the community to help in the planting on Easter Saturday. This was followed by a short time of reflection.



We thank God for every opportunity He gives us to bring Him glory and pray for forgiveness when our human weakness prevails.

Chelmunds Court

Frances Sherwood and Shirley Turner support residents and staff in Chelmunds Court, a Dementia Care Home in Chelmsley Wood.



Our Chaplaincy to a Dementia Care Home began some three years ago after our Associate Priest, Helene Horan, arranged for our initial training with CIGB. The Care Home is near to St Andrew's church where we work and worship.

We regularly attended the Home offering support to residents, their relatives, and the staff but in 2020 our visits had to stop due to Covid restrictions. Then, just when we thought we would be able to return, the home was blighted by a severe attack of shingles, so sadly we seem to have been in a 'Stop start' situation



As well as regular visits, we have plans to arrange a monthly service of familiar hymns and prayers, and holy communion by extension. This will be followed by a time of fellowship over tea and chat.



There are also plans for the residents to join us for a street party in honour of the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations later in the year.

Stories from Chaplains

Jericho Foundation and YMCA

Rotimi Benjamin is Chaplain at Jericho and also at YMCA Heart of England. CIGB has Associations with several other Chaplaincy teams of which YMCA is one

Jericho

The hybrid work format really came into play at Jericho Head-Office during 2021 as many staff worked from home. Although I visited weekly, as usual, I only managed to see a handful of tenants and staff on each visit. Sadly, I haven't seen some of the staff for 18 months but we keep in touch regularly using WhatsApp. The staff I do see always appreciate a visit and welcome me with a smile. I hope and pray that 2022 will be a more fruitful year.

YMCA

2021 has been another year in which all of us have been affected by Covid-19 and by lockdown restrictions. Staff and residents here at YMCA Heart of England have had their own share of complexities and difficulties during the pandemic and as a housing provider YMCA Heart of England had to be open 24 hours a day to manage the tenancy of residents regardless of all the Covid restrictions. But all praise to God that despite all the heartaches of the last 2 years, there are still other things in our lives we can be grateful and thankful to God for.

During 2021, the Chaplaincy team at YMCA Heart of England kept busy supporting staff and residents. We were able to visit all our Birmingham and Coventry sites, providing pastoral supports and drawing alongside the housing and maintenance staff who are always available at work to manage the accommodation and provide on-going support to the residents.

Some staff were still working from home so face-to-face contact was impossible. However, we kept in touch with regular emails and phone calls.

Now that restrictions are lifted we look forward to much more contact in 2022.



As you know, many of our Chaplains were unable to visit as usual in 2021. Here are some short reports.

West Midlands Fire Service Chaplain Tracy Sweet writes ...

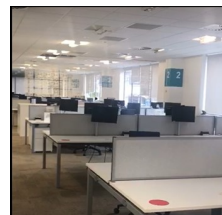
I finished my training and was all ready to go into the fire station when Covid hit and all was on hold until September 2021 when I started visiting the Fire Stations in Perry Barr and Erdington. I have met most of the watches now and am beginning to build relationships with staff. I visit the Stations to share a cup of tea and a chat: if I time it right there's breakfast too! A good, informal time to get to know people.



I am always made to feel welcome, and getting to know them and hear the stories about work, their families and day to day life is a real privilege.

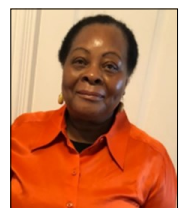
One of the fire personnel had been involved in a serious accident and I was asked to pray for him, I am thankful to say he is improving well.

The Chaplaincy to Birmingham City Council was disbanded, but Chaplain Val Benjamin continues to support staff ...



Covid restrictions meant closed offices, but while working from home kept people safe, that all-important social contact was lost. I had got to know staff from the Sutton New Road office, in Erdington, really well and we set up a WhatsApp group so that we could keep in touch and support each other.

Although not as good as face-to-face contact, the group has proved very successful and effective. Just being able to communicate gave a sense of togetherness, thus making the isolation more manageable. It was good to share about the effects Covid was having. Shared information, concern, support and good humour helped us all to keep going through challenging times.



Irma Hilton is part of the team at Longbridge Village, and hopes to return soon ...

Pre-Covid I helped support the Singing for Health activity at Longbridge Village. Covid put an end to that and then, just as we were due to start again, the lady who runs the group became very ill - I visited her at home in February. I heard recently that the group is due to start again soon and I'm very much looking forward to being able to support the residents who attend. In the meantime I have been helping at the pop-up art gallery (see the report by Sonia Jackson.)



**TRAINING COURSE:
INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTARY
WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY**



**Our next course will be held in Autumn 2022
Topics include: What is Chaplaincy at Work?, Listening skills, Discerning signs of God at work.**

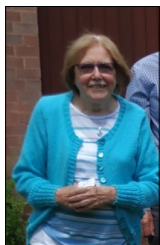
More information from: val.dalton@cigb.org.uk

Course fee £50

More Retail Chaplaincies

Solihull Town Centre

Beryl Moppett and Anne Rock report on the Chaplaincy to Solihull Town Centre.



It's been a challenging year in Solihull town centre as Covid restrictions and various other factors meant that the team were unable to visit many shops in their roles as Chaplains during 2021, however, we were able to visit as customers and so some contact was kept.

We have also had to say goodbye to some of the team in the last year as they have moved on to other things so it was a diminished team that managed to visit all the shops in the town centre taking Christmas cards and mince pies with us – a little reminder that retail staff had not been forgotten by us. More planning than ever 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 we were able to keep things as hygienic as possible!



Once again, this small gesture was much appreciated by the retail staff in Solihull, and we are grateful for the generosity of Touchwood Management and Solihull Churches Together for funding this.

Throughout the year the team kept in touch via regular Zoom meetings and we look forward to some new beginnings in 2022. We hope that some new Chaplains will come and join the team in Solihull too!

Anne Rock continues ...

I have been Chaplain to the House of Fraser store for over 20 years along with Beryl. We have built up many relationships as well as seeing many staff come and go.

We are just starting to visit again, following the pandemic, and were concerned to find that all the staff were working their notice and then having to re-apply on zero-hour contracts, rather than having a permanent post as before. However, the store manager assured us that the staff were meeting their targets. Staff who are dealing with all sorts of life-issues really appreciate being able to talk to us.

Longbridge Town Centre

Val Dalton writes of returning to the High Street and of renewed relationships.

"Quick! We're selling off some *really* nice biscuits for 10p – you must have some!" The staff colleague climbed on a step-stool to reach the last three packets of biscuits from the top shelf. "Here you are" she said, "You deserve them!" What a lovely greeting as I made my usual weekly visit to the supermarket that is part of my Chaplaincy 'patch'.

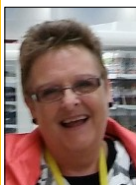
Like many of our Chaplains I didn't visit very much in 2021 – and Sainsbury's had a 'no visitors in store' policy which, as a guest, I had to comply with. After such a long absence I was a bit worried about going back – would anyone recognise me? Would I be welcome?? Well, I needn't have worried: the relationships were just as strong as ever, and some even stronger as people shared their experiences of Covid.

It has been a joy to resume my weekly visits and to hear about answers to prayer from before Covid: - a place for a child in a school where their complex needs could be met, and a definitive diagnosis and treatment advice for a daughter's eating disorder were just two examples. I've also seen photos of babies born in Lockdown – now aged 2, and of babies born more recently. There have been moments of great sadness too as I heard news of beloved relations dying alone because of visiting restrictions, and the huge frustration felt as people were not able to say their final goodbyes – not even at a funeral.

I continue my habit of sending a card on 'occasions' new babies and new jobs are two of the joyful occasions, but also 'get well' and 'sympathy' cards. These small gestures are always appreciated and are a way of passing on something of God's love and care. We are called to 'Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep'.

It's been good to hear that, despite Covid, the shops on the High Street are doing well, but sad too as there are two empty units where businesses have failed.

I am sure that God is at work in Longbridge and I always pray before I visit, asking Him to guide me to those He wants me to meet, and for just the right words to say ... or not, and for wisdom to know when to talk and when to listen ... or the other way round! Elaine would call it 'an intentional listening presence'.



The rewards of Chaplaincy? I am humbled that people trust me with some of the deep things in their lives – things they find hard to talk about to family and close friends. There's the pleasure of being greeted as a friend – a smile and wave from the other end of the supermarket; the look of relaxation as I walk in the door and the appreciation of that moment of relaxation. Sometimes it's the little things that make a big difference in people's working day.

Occasionally there are 10p luxury chocolate biscuits too ...

More Retail Chaplaincies

Kings Heath

Pat and Graham Wigley look back on a year in Kings Heath.

We return to the same Psalm as last year: God (has been and) is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. Psalm 46 v 1

During employment, Graham trained as a work-place first-aider and recalls the primary basic principles – the ABC of First Aid:

Assess the situation – put your personal safety first. You cannot help others if you are unsafe or unwell yourself.

Breathing – check for breath; if necessary clear the airway and breathe for them. Enlist help, and reinforcements.

Circulation – check for signs; breathing, coughing, movement, continue with support until danger is past.

*“God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.” Ps 46 v 1 (NLT)*

Relating to the above points, our experiences have been these:-

Although many shops were mandatorily closed and visits impossible until mid-Spring 2021, we continued to regularly assess the situation but didn't feel comfortable resuming Chaplaincy until September, a full 12 months since last visiting.

Although some traders had found relief elsewhere, either via on-line trading, home deliveries, or moving to more healthy locations, others sadly had closed, unable to sustain the harsh reality of lockdowns and no customers but with continuing overheads. Overall, we experienced the loss of around 12 shops ... and many friendships.

For those shops remaining, there were a few in good health but many, although open, were 'coughing' and struggling for 'fresh air.' We recognise that some of these will inevitably close, whilst for others the outlook is bleak, but we continue to pray for and support each of them personally before the Lord, calling on further resources of the prayers of church members and their personal physical shopping visits to chat and encourage shop staff.

We persevere, seeking to bring encouragement, cheer and loving friendship.

*“Our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of
heaven and earth” Ps 124 v 8*



Waterways

The Waterways Chaplaincy is another team associated with CIGB. Richard Alford has been able to continue his Chaplaincy work throughout the pandemic.



2021 has been a year of continued work amongst the boaters and those who are connected to the water in some way. Our remit is not restricted to just 'liveaboard' boaters, but CRT/EA staff, canal side residents & businesses, and those who just like to be near to the water.

Nationally there are now 110 Chaplains across England with one now in Wales. The hub I am responsible for in the Midlands now has 12 Chaplains, ranging from Hinckley on the Ashby Canal, through Birmingham and the Black Country and then to Saul Junction which is south of Gloucester. There are also two Chaplains who are continuous cruisers. This growth has brought good challenges, not least trying to arrange meetings that everyone can attend!



Last year we were able, by virtue of a gift given to the whole Chaplaincy to have a meal together when we said farewell to one of our long-standing members. He hasn't totally broken his ties with us as he has agreed to undertake our Lock training when required. The Lock training is a requirement for all new Chaplains to undertake along with the mentoring and attending two training sessions.

We also had a great day of celebration at Lichfield Cathedral at which over 20 Chaplains were commissioned. They had been commissioned via Zoom during lockdown so this was a great occasion to commission them in person and in public. The picture shows the Bishop with the new Chaplains.



Personally, speaking I have been very busy over the year, mentoring the new Chaplains, attending meetings, and generally trying to ensure that things run smoothly. This has meant that I haven't spent as much time on the towpath as I would like, but I have always been available for people when they ask for help.

We hope you have enjoyed reading about our work in 2021 / 22. Our contact details are on page 1—we would love to hear from you.