

# Diocesan Chaplaincy Development Leads

Papers for meeting with Archbishop Stephen Cottrell on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## Paper 1: How does chaplaincy [of all sectors and contexts] help achieve the CofE Vision for 2020s?

### Executive Summary

This is the first of three preparatory papers. This paper demonstrates how chaplaincy supports the Church of England (CofE) Vision. It argues that chaplaincy gives access to so many the church wishes to reach while also increasing the church's visibility. Paper two explores the opportunities and challenges entailed. Paper three outlines a possible strategy. These papers are accompanied by Delegate's Questions.

### Paper 1

The Diocesan Chaplaincy Leads Group (DCLG) Planning Team fully endorses the CofE 2020 Vision and believes that its ecological language helps clarify chaplaincy's relationship within the church. This paper deploys the Vision's headings 'One Vision', 'Three Priorities' and 'Six Bold Outcomes' to explore this.

#### 1. One Vision

A Church for the whole nation which is Jesus Christ centred, and shaped by, the five marks of mission. A church that is **simpler, humbler, bolder**.

*Simplicity, humility and boldness are* some of the virtues chaplains take into their workplace each day. They minister as Christians in a place they cannot control, populated by people they cannot direct. *Simplicity, humility and boldness* also names the virtues needed to lead a ministry that is funded by and adds value to a secular agency. Chaplains have the day-to-day experience to help the church to embrace this Vision.

#### 2. Three priorities

- **To become a church of missionary disciples** where all God's people are free to live the Christian life, wherever we spend our time Sunday to Saturday.
- **To be a church where mixed ecology is the norm\*** – where every person in England has access to an enriching and compelling community of faith by adding new churches and new forms of Church to our parishes, cathedrals, schools and chaplaincies.
- To be a church that is younger and more diverse.

Chaplaincy is a space that almost seems designed for growing in **missionary discipleship**. The chaplain explores how to ‘live the Christian life... Sunday to Saturday’, always developing their practice in response to people’s real circumstances and questions. Through their volunteer network, they equip others to do the same. The DCLG advocates for chaplaincy and, by God’s grace, new chaplaincies and new chaplains have emerged from this advocacy. People exploring chaplaincy have come from all church traditions. They are young and old, ordained and lay, from the edge and centre of the church, some with many years of discipleship and ministry behind them and some just beginning their journey of faith. If they have anything in common, it is a desire to live and share faith in the world.

So ‘missionary discipleship’ seems like a natural place for collaboration between church and chaplaincy. Widening the ‘range of vocational and formational pathways to encourage and equip more chaplaincy – which many chaplains believe is needed – could also widen the scope for the vocation and training of ‘missionary disciples’.

Chaplaincy often reaches **younger and more diverse** groups of people than many churches. Yet without a meaningful ‘mixed ecology’ chaplaincy’s reach may feel irrelevant to the institution: with it, it is invaluable.

If the church is serious about **mixed ecology**, chaplaincy is the ‘canary in the coal mine’. Chaplaincy will flourish where the church understands and promotes a mixed ecology, but will be quick to suffer when the church becomes over-anxious or over-focused on institution. The question ‘how well is chaplaincy flourishing in your diocese?’ is a useful challenge for leaders taking mixed ecology seriously. Analysis of how parishes, pioneering and chaplaincies engage with one another will be telling.

Raffay (Raffay, Firbank, Haslam, Yau, 2014, to be submitted for publication), after Brown (1984) writes of a mixed ecology where the ‘glaring shortcomings’ of each form of ministry (parish, chaplaincy, pioneering) is redeemed by another. We ask what is a good relationship like between these different ministries? The challenge to be ‘younger and more diverse’ can be a fruitful starting point as chaplaincy holds many (including young people) who – practically, emotionally, or culturally – cannot access today’s church. Yet, chaplaincy contact can rarely offer all the richness of community that parish life can. The complementarity is obvious: the route to joint flourishing emerges through shared praxis, especially when a non-zero sum game approach facilitates cooperation between players sometimes inclined to competition.

### 3. Six Bold Outcomes

From the three strategic priorities we have identified Six Bold Outcomes.

A church for everyone through:

- **Doubling the number of children and young active disciples** in the Church of England by 2030.
- A Church of England which **fully represents the communities we serve** in age and diversity.

A pathway for everyone into an accessible and contextual expression of church through:

- **A parish system revitalised for mission** so churches can reach and serve everyone in their community.
- Creating **ten thousand new Christian communities** across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital.

*Empowered by:*

- All Christians in the Church of England envisioned, resourced and released to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the whole of life, bringing transformation to the church and world.
- All local churches, supported by their diocese, becoming communities and hubs for initial and ongoing formation.

Based on these Six Bold Outcomes, we offer some practical suggestions:

**Position:** chaplaincy gives access to so many the church wishes to reach.

**Visibility:** Chaplaincy offers the church visibility and connection in the world.

**School chaplaincy** especially is growing and offers routes for all these outcomes.

Children and young people are especially able to be disciples – it doesn't start at age 18. Chaplains are often supporting schools in this way.

Those focused on the parish system often see lay people seeking chaplaincy roles as a way of 'giving up' on the missional life of the parish. Chaplaincy could offer the same roles as part of a co-ordinated, vibrant mixed ecology, **revitalising parishes for mission**, rather than being a refuge. Where local churches are places of **ongoing formation** chaplains could support with training and experience; where they were not, chaplaincies can support with opportunities and placements.

Many Chaplains are well placed to create **new Christian communities** especially in work/education. To do so they may need – on behalf of the church – to develop new skills for working with new generations in society's new shapes. Many chaplains see their work as evangelism, but is the church equipped to support it?

Chaplaincy is 'distinctive but inclusive' - creating the opportunity for a safe space without a predetermined outcome. In that space, people discover who they are and we observe them come to faith; surely, that's evangelism.

#### 4. Conclusion

Chaplaincy, we have argued can not only help achieve the Church's Vision but also test that Vision. Ours is a ministry deeply rooted in the **community** (and faith) of the church, but currently only lightly rooted in the **institution** of the church. Chaplaincy's very being makes it a critical friend. Are we part of this church with this Vision? Our presence asks, 'how far is this a strategy that focused on institution?' and 'how far are we considered part of this institution?' The culture in some sectors of chaplaincy seems to be closer to what the national Vision lays out. If a chaplain delivers an *Alpha?* course in a prison is that part of a 'church of missionary disciples'? If a hospital chaplain baptises a young person as they die, does the church become younger?

Chaplains occupy spaces that force us to face any 'instrumentality' we bring to ministry. Through chaplaincy the church can oblige itself to hear the voices of those excluded from the church, whether by geography (military personnel), disempowerment (prison, school), or sometimes identity. Through its simplicity, humility and courage, chaplaincy seeks to be part of 'a church for the whole nation' at a time when the institution of the 'state church' is caught up in debates that keep many (especially young people) away.

Chaplaincy is a ministry in which **missionary disciples** are formed, learn, reflect and grow. Chaplains learn how to bring their faith into secular and diverse spaces. As they do, they test and refine that faith in the crucible of pastoral and prophetic practice.

#### References

Brown, R.E. (1984) *The churches the apostles left behind*. New York: Paulist Press.

Raffay, J., Firbank, M., Haslam, M., Yau, L. (2014) *Chaplaincy within a 'Mixed Ecology'*. To be submitted for publication.