

Diocesan Chaplaincy Development Leads

Papers for meeting with Archbishop Stephen Cottrell on 9th November 2023

Paper 2: What are the opportunities and challenges to growing chaplaincy within the CofE vision for the 2020s?

Executive Summary

This second paper of three addresses the challenges and explores the opportunities to growing chaplaincy within a 'mixed ecology'. We argue for serious attention to the *interrelationships* between ministries to ensure that the 'mixed ecology' leads to genuine flourishing and vibrant Christian communities.

Paper 2

We desire to see many more CofE chaplains being well trained and equipped to minister on the mission frontlines where people are, whether at work, school, in the community or in hospital or prison. However, such a proposal is not without its challenges. We turn to these now ahead of considering the opportunities.

Even if Ryan's contention that chaplaincy holds the future for 'engagement of faith and belief groups in the public square' (Ryan, 2015, p. 9) is accurate, the Church of England (CofE) can no longer assume that Anglican priests can move easily into chaplaincy posts in secular host organisations. These organisations are increasingly calling for chaplains to come from a variety of belief backgrounds, including humanism. Some of these groups are evangelical in their zeal and offer their members outstanding training. If we imagine that Anglican ministerial formation will ensure shortlisting, we may be sleepwalking.

1. Challenges

Financial

Post-Covid finances remain vulnerable. This is as true of the public and charity sector as it is of the church. When cuts need to be made, chaplaincy can be included. Despite chaplaincy's positive impact, it can be hard to evidence within the host organisation's key performance indicators (KPIs). This is also true of the church. A newly appointed Diocesan Bishop's first

question to chaplains was ‘How does chaplaincy help grow the local church?’ Yet Dr Mike Osborn an NHS consultant in Bath and a qualitative researcher wrote:

The chaplaincy gift of time and listening is as important as sterile conditions in a hospital operating theatre. Time is their infection control measure. Acute hospitals are very hot, busy places. It’s a challenge to meet the targets and offer therapeutic care. Chaplains are essential. They are present in every part of the hospital, offering spiritual and psychological care. Without them, who else is there, offering that level of contact and comfort? Without the chaplaincy we would continue to focus on the bio-medical data but we would be at risk of losing touch with the real, lived experience of patients. Medics are under pressure to be concise and knowing. At the heart of chaplaincy is uncertainty, unknowing, journeying with people. Chaplains have an overview of the whole hospital and an independence. They speak truth to power in a helpful and constructive way. They offer intimate support to patients and are a critical friend to the organisation. They both ‘rise above it’ and get mucky and involved. The chaplain’s main therapeutic ‘weapon’ is powerlessness (Bath and Wells, 2020).

If chaplaincy didn’t exist, you’d have to invent it pretty fast! However, even Osborn’s affirmation for chaplaincy doesn’t ‘fix’ the disconnect between the organisation’s KPIs and chaplaincy’s impact. Thus, the vulnerability of chaplaincy finances continues.

Organisational

Whenever organisations seek to work in partnership, there are challenges. No single partner will have complete ownership and all will need to find a new consensus on ethos, process and outcomes. If the Church of England continues to invest time and finance in chaplaincy, as we hope that it will, it will need to do so as a partner and guest in the space, rather than as a host.

Local

There are as many models of chaplaincy as there are of the local church. This impacts on organisational challenges and opportunities, locally, regionally and nationally. As such, some chaplain’s contact and work with the diocese will be considered part of their paid work; others will need to take leave for a diocesan meeting.

Diocese

We are aware of a postcode lottery of dioceses who engage with and support chaplaincies, and those for whom chaplaincy is not currently an area of focus. There is a similar dynamic when new bishops are appointed, particularly if they don’t share their predecessor’s

understanding of or support for chaplaincy. This echoes the challenges that changes to leadership bring to secular organisations which employ chaplains.

About half of the Church of England Dioceses still have no chaplaincy lead with at least 10% of their time dedicated to the role. We have models for part time and honorary chaplaincy advisers which have been proved to work, but to set them up does itself take time.

National

Within the National Church Institutions (NCIs) there are currently about a dozen staff members across several teams who have an interest in chaplaincy and offer support. However, there is no single person or group who can give permission or hold accountability or who has a budget, even for a day like the Diocesan and Sector Chaplaincy Leads conference. (It's perhaps worth noting that no one gave us permission to hold such a day and we are not accountable to anyone for it, because such structures of accountability and permission don't yet exist). A similar dynamic is preset within the College of Bishops where no single bishop acts as an advocate for chaplaincy. One area where a clear NCI lead and a College of Bishops lead would be helpful is safeguarding. Despite requests, the National Safeguarding Team (NST) offers no training or support to chaplains, despite there being many thousands of them, working alongside high levels of trauma and vulnerability and with all of the complexities of working in partnership. In contrast there is dedicated support from the NST to the 43 Cathedrals.

Vocation, formation and deployment

Models of vocation, formation and deployment affect both dioceses and the national church, and are decided upon and delivered locally and nationally. There is a postcode lottery from diocese to diocese and a distinct lack of vocational support and training and formation pathways at a national level.

Cultural

There can be significant cultural barriers between chaplaincy and church. These cultural barriers can be seen at several levels:

- Diocesan: alongside many examples of a mature and nuanced understanding of chaplaincy leading to excellent chaplaincy support, development and growth there are also significant gaps. This is often rooted in limited understanding of partnership and shared control, being a guest, not a host in a situation. Permission and accountability need to be approached differently in this context.

Local: people who come to faith through chaplaincy can still find it very hard to overcome the cultural barriers and join a church.

Chaplains can feel culturally and organisationally isolated from the church, they can also isolate themselves, and both chaplains and the local church can approach the relationship in a competitive spirit, rather than one of mixed ecology with all ministry being of value. Chaplains can even define themselves in opposition to other chaplains and therefore isolate themselves from their peers. There are also challenges in addressing cultural matters with organisational solutions, whether at diocesan or local level.

2. Opportunities

Financial

An increasing number of bids for central church funding include chaplaincy and these are being considered and awarded. Bristol and Durham are two recent examples. This is a new and positive development, which we hope will continue.

The overwhelming majority of funding for chaplaincy continues to come from the employing organisations (NHS trusts, HM Forces, Ministry of Justice etc). There is also funding from local churches and churches together groups and from charities and trust funds. It is good news that there is considerable external investment in chaplaincy. This means that the proportion of chaplaincy funded wholly by Diocesan Common Fund is tiny and often limited to university chaplaincy and chaplaincy development. When a diocese invests in chaplaincy development [whether paid or honorary] this leads to new chaplaincies being created with new funding streams.

Organisational

Chaplaincy can create and nurture connections between a diversity of organisations and contexts. Through this we can learn together and grow in partnership. Since 2020, for example, there has been a chaplain at Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station. The chaplain is a Baptist Minister. He is paid by the power station and employed by the diocese of Bath and Wells. He has created a team of honorary chaplains, including an Islamic chaplain. The newly appointed Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Mohammed Saddiq, has asked to find out more about inter-faith working and so will visit Hinkley. Amidst this diverse partnership, spiritual and pastoral care is offered to the 11,000 workers who are on site each day and all of the partners are learning from each other.

We offer:

- Models of honorary and paid diocesan chaplaincy leads and how their ministry leads to growing chaplaincy.

- Models of impact of a chaplaincy lead on Bishop's Staff and how this also enables growing chaplaincy.
- Models of vocation, formation and deployment to enable people to discern their vocation and learn, grow, serve and lead within it.

Cultural

If chaplaincy can get fully involved within organisations and faith communities, it can use qualitative and quantitative data to tell the story of chaplaincy impact. If chaplaincy is present, it can work in partnership to shape an outward facing, missional ethos and agenda, it can begin to 'make the weather' both within organisations and communities within the church.

There are exciting opportunities for chaplaincy within the CofE vision for the 2020s. For instance, we are already working with the CofE Education team and the Growing Faith Foundation to discern how chaplaincy can contribute to the new Flourish communities within education. Possible models for FE communities are below.

- **Creation Community:** A community based around an allotment/garden with a garden shed/prayer space. There would be a clear prophetic commitment to helping the college and community get to net-zero and alongside that, a commitment to helping sustainability and nature diversity. Anyone would be welcome to help with the garden/allotment where there would also be a programme of teaching [environment, Christian basics and on-going discipleship], prayer, meditation, hospitality and fellowship. There would also be gathered worship and celebrations.
- **Peacebuilding Community:** A community with an especial focus on dialogue with other faiths, spiritualities, cultures and contexts, seeking to be bridge-builders and peace-makers within the wider college and town/city. There could also be a focus on global justice and restorative justice issues. As with the Creation Community there could be a space where people could gather and a programme of teaching, activities, discipleship, prayer and worship.

Similar models could be followed with arts [drama, music etc], mental and spiritual well-being and more. Chaplaincy enables a missional engagement with the public square and especially with the public sector. It enables us to be there with some of the 95% who don't regularly attend any place of worship.

3. Conclusion

Our invitation to the CofE is to give serious attention to the *interrelationships* between its ministries to ensure that the 'mixed ecology' leads to genuine flourishing and vibrant Christian communities able to exercise loving leadership in the issues of our day. In Ryan's (2015) words, chaplaincy is:

a ministry that is innovative, fitting in with the way British society is, rather than how religious and belief groups might hope it to be; a ministry that provides real practical benefits [...] and services for organisations on their terms, as well as for religious groups alone; a ministry that goes to where people actually are, rather than waiting for them to come to religion. As a result chaplaincy fits especially well into modern British society. (p. 79).

To reiterate, chaplains 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 a secular agency. Chaplains have the day-to-day experience to help the church to embrace this vision.

References

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