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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩ October 2024

Chaplaincy, a gift to communities: Listen, care, pray and bless

In moments of sorrow, struggle, or uncertainty chaplains walk alongside those in need. Through their ministry they bring hope and healing to places where it is needed most, from hospitals and schools to workplaces and courts, care for the elderly and those at the end of life, as reflected by some of those who have experienced their care first hand.

Arriving at Hinkley Point C with the chaplains, the first questions Mike Haslam, Chaplaincy Development Adviser heard were about how, when and where staff could gather to pray and how you cope amidst personal grief. He added "Surrounding these questions was the hum of good-humoured banter, which you only hear when people trust each other."

During Covid-19, a nurse at the Royal United Hospital, Bath shared, "I wouldn't have got through the last few months without the chaplains. They've got this knack of finding you, this inner sense of where you are and when you need them to visit."



A number of chaplains support the Avon and Somerset Police service.

Pupil chaplaincy is a growing chaplaincy, one which has been appreciated by pupils and teachers alike. Mike said, "In one school, an 11-year-old, who had never before encountered church, or chaplaincy, told me that a chaplain was there 'to listen, care, pray for and bless the school' while in a university setting a student said chaplaincy gave them hope, saying 'That Christianity could be for me and gave me a vision of the church family, before I'd met the church.'"

Mike concluded, "It's been amazing to witness chaplaincy grow, with around ten new chaplaincies formed each year over the past seven years. I pray that chaplaincy continues to be a blessing to our communities."

Find out more at
bathandwells.org.uk/chaplaincy

News in brief

24 hour Wave of Prayer

For 24 hours, a wave of prayer spread across the Diocese of Bath and Wells, as people came together to pray for the growth of church and the transformation of their communities. Events took place right across Somerset, from intimate prayer gatherings in homes and churches to outdoor events and online prayer walls. The Archbishop of Canterbury joined the wave travelling to events in Bath, Wells, Bridgwater, Nailsea and Frome.

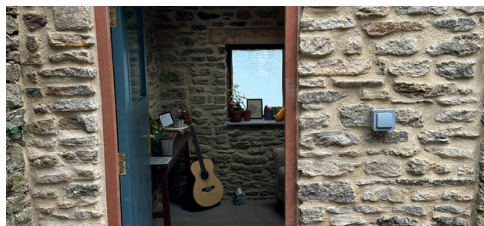


Highlighting the issues of modern slavery through art

The Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Mohammed Saddiq, is to open an art exhibition organised by Hidden Voices Bridgwater at Taunton Minster on 18 October to mark Anti-Slavery Day. The exhibition runs from 18 - 23 October. On 20 October Bishop Michael will speak

A prayerful space

A former gardener's shed has been converted into a 24-hour prayer space at St Mary's Church in Frome. It is part of overall plans to establish a prayerful community around St Mary's former vicarage. A growing community meets fortnightly to explore different approaches to prayer - Ignatian, Taize, Centering, Northumbrian and others. The Prayer Shed, officially opened by Archbishop Justin, will be available for prayer 24 hours a day.



at Evensong at the Minster. Local artists have donated works for that illustrate the realities of modern slavery. It's hoped the power of art will help convey the urgent and often hidden nature of this human crisis.

Find out more on these and other news stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

A light which shines in the darkness

By Trevor Willmott, Assistant Bishop for the Diocese of Bath and Wells

The custodial sentences imposed on many of those involved in the recent riots in communities across our country have highlighted, yet again, the issue of criminal justice and the pressures and strains within the prison system. The seemingly ever-increasing size of the prison population; the appalling conditions within many of our older prisons, especially those in our inner cities; the almost total lack of provision for education and rehabilitation and an apparent unwillingness by those elected to Parliament to consider whether the whole of our justice system needs a radical overhaul have all resulted in much media comment. But one part of the prison system which has not been mentioned is the invaluable role played by those who serve as Chaplains.

Prison and restorative justice have been a constant thread almost throughout the whole of my life beginning with my first visit while still in my teens to what was then called a Borstal.

Since then, I've had the privilege of working with chaplaincy teams across the whole of the prison

estate. I've witnessed at first hand the extraordinary work done those teams, lay and ordained, of all faiths, working together to witness to God's love in Christ and caring for all those in the prison system, both staff and prisoners. I've often said to those on the outside, if you want to know what true collaborative ministry looks like in practice, look no further than a chaplaincy team.

While each member remains true to his or her particular faith, the barriers which often divide people of faith have no part in that shared work of witness and service.

Sadly, all too often, the work of Chaplaincies not just in prison but in all aspects of our human life, in education, hospital, mental health, care homes and many other places, is barely known – that is, until we need their care. But Chaplaincies are the yeast which leaven our society. The light which shines in the darkness. Society, as we long and pray for it to be, would be the poorer without them.

Trevor Willmott
Assistant Bishop

Walking alongside

Prebendary Adrian Prior-Sankey leads the Taunton Team Chaplaincy delivering chaplaincy in areas such as public spaces, offices and retail, he is also Chaplain to the UK Hydrographic Office.



Adrian Prior-Sankey Chaplain to the UK Hydrographic Office

In what way is chaplaincy a gift to communities?

I often say that chaplaincy is a gift of the church 'free at the point of delivery'. It's coming alongside and listening, in a non judgmental way, to someone irrespective of whether they have a faith or not. We can offer a different dimension of care that complements other support systems.

What role do chaplains play in supporting their communities?

I feel chaplains offer emotional support, and prayer, that's our unique selling point (USP) if you like. We come from an understanding of faith, signposting to appropriate services like mental health or welfare, particularly in times of stress, such as redundancies or health concerns.

How important is it that chaplaincy is where people are?

I think employers are increasingly recognising that employees are more than just work horses, they are body, mind and spirit. Being present consistently in these places allows chaplains to offer timely support when needed, especially to those who may not realise they need help until they face personal crises.

Where do you feel your chaplaincy has had a positive impact?

During a period of redundancy staff faced high levels of stress and anxiety. They valued the ability to talk to someone who wasn't management and wasn't part of the trade union system. Others have confided in me about health or family relationship concerns.

How do chaplains support people when they need it most?

Through presence and visibility. People often approach me who have been surprised they wanted or needed to use the chaplain. They were pleased the chaplain was there. People you think might least have expected to do that.

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