

Diocesan Chaplaincy Development Leads

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

Paper 3: What is our plan for developing chaplaincy of all sectors within Church of England dioceses?

Executive Summary

This third paper of three draws on evidence of successful practice to suggest practical ways in which serious attention to the *interrelationships* between ministries could create the most fruitful mixed ecology.

Paper 3

Chaplaincy is growing in breadth and depth in the Church of England Diocese where time and care is given to it. This is seen in dioceses from Exeter to Carlisle, and from Bath and Wells to Oxford, to Lichfield, to Derbyshire, to Liverpool in between. It is seen in all chaplaincy sectors and we cite prison chaplaincy as an exemplar. It is further evidenced in research from organisations ranging from Ryan (2015) to National Institute for Christian Education Research (2023, in press) and in the stories of local chaplaincies whenever these are gathered.

1. Introduction

We have noticed common features in these dioceses where support is given to chaplaincy and it is growing and indeed where chaplains engage proactively.¹ We have heard of areas where chaplaincy can do more to grow within dioceses. Further, we are aware of potential areas of development within the life of the national church (Raffay, Firbank, Haslam, Yaull, 2014, to be submitted for publication). We believe that a development of theological understanding of chaplaincy is relevant at all levels.

¹ These include: (1) A diocesan chaplaincy lead with at least 10% of time dedicated to the role and a Bishop's licence or commission. The role can be paid or honorary. (2) Bishop's Staff lead / advocate for chaplaincy. (3) Chaplaincy Group with members who are willing to take the initiative and help to form the story and strategy. (4) Vocational and formational pathways, within or beyond the diocese. (5) Creativity within deployment, for instance, dual track curacies. (6) Audit of chaplains in the diocese, (7) Generous theological understanding of chaplaincy, ecumenically and inter-faith, willing to be a partner, and a guest rather than host and have a kingdom vision.

2. Theology

There are as many models and theologies of chaplaincy as there are of the local church. Yet there are some underlying principles that almost all chaplains hold in common. Haslam (2022) summarises:

Christian chaplaincy is a missional and incarnational ministry, going out from the local church, meeting people where they are and living and sharing faith there. God is already present in each and every community. Chaplaincy can enable that divine presence to be revealed and articulated anew for each generation. Chaplaincy is present and rooted in communities, offering welcome and accompaniment to all within them, to people of all faiths, cultures and traditions. Chaplains are spiritual leaders in their communities, with a pastoral and prophetic ministry for each individual, from the powerless to the powerful, and for the whole community, developing and nurturing its ethos and values.

In practice:

This missional and incarnational ministry means that we can also be there, and be trusted, when things are tough. When the Taunton Debenhams closed, the chaplain was a familiar face, valued and respected for her long service within the store. The staff trusted her as an independent voice and were able to talk to her of their fears and grief. She created safe spaces for reflection, fellowship and prayer and continued to serve the store and the staff up to its closure and beyond (Raffay, Firbank, Haslam, Yau, 2014, submitted for publication).

Again:

In a different way, at the start of the Covid lockdown in the spring of 2020 the chaplain at Hinkley Point C was told by a senior member of staff 'if you leave site we're f***ing stuffed'. Another member of staff put it slightly differently when he said to the chaplain, 'thanks for making us feel safe, mate'. The chaplain reflected that 'presence is such a huge part of chaplaincy and a little bit goes a long way. Maybe that is because we represent a bigger presence' (Haslam 2022).

Whether informed in its usage or merely selected as a trending word, the CofE's term 'ecology' is fortuitous. The Oxford Dictionary defines ecology as 'the branch of biology that deals with *the relations of organisms to one another* [my italics] and to their physical surroundings' (OED, n.d.). Thus to declare that a 'mixed ecology is the norm' (Cottrell, 2021) is not only to recognise diverse ministries but to emphasize their *interrelationships*. Bastioni *et al.* (2019, p. 3) assert that 'a well-defined ecosystem has strong interactions among its components and weak interactions across its boundaries.' This understanding attests to the importance of attending to interactions *between* components precisely to be more effective at the boundaries. In this paper, we propose that parish ministry, chaplaincy, and pioneer ministry are each insufficient without strong interactions *between* them.

Attending to these interactions invites a dynamic, creative, and prospectively playful assessment of the constituent 'members'. In *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* Brown (1984, p.146) contended that the early church lacked 'a consistent or uniform ecclesiology'. He argued that the epistles 'had quite different emphases' (p.146). Especially salient today is his point that 'even though each emphasis could be effective in the particular circumstances of the writing, each had glaring shortcomings that would constitute a danger were that emphasis isolated...' (pp.146-7).

3. Diocesan support for and engagement with chaplaincy

A diocese which supports chaplaincy will have a developed understanding of the theology of chaplaincy and will assign chaplaincy equal value with all other models of ministry within the mixed ecology of church. The diocese will also appreciate that the CofE doesn't 'own' or control chaplaincy and will understand how permission and accountability work for chaplains who hold a Bishop's Licence or Commission yet are employed by another organisation, such as an NHS Trust.

A diocese which is supporting chaplaincy will:

- Pray for chaplaincy.
- Have chaplaincy within its vision and strategy and funding priorities.
- Appoint a Chaplaincy Adviser, whether paid or honorary, who is supported by a chaplaincy group and with a clear link to a member of diocesan support staff and to a member of Bishop's Staff and Bishop's Council.
- Nominate a member of Bishop's Staff as an advocate for chaplaincy.
- Include chaplaincy within its Learning and Development Programme and host an annual gathering and celebration of chaplaincy.
- Share the story of chaplaincy and of the difference that it makes.
- Offer vocational and training frameworks and pathways with a chaplaincy focus, including for instance, chaplaincy placements and hybrid curacies in parish and chaplaincy.
- Offer Ministry Review to lead chaplains, including those who happen to be lay.

4. Chaplaincy support for and engagement with dioceses

Chaplains have a key role to play in developing and growing chaplaincy within their dioceses, which are key stakeholders within the chaplaincy partnership. Chaplains can:

- Pray for the diocese.
- Turn up at meetings, chapters and synods and get involved. If the timing or agendas aren't always relevant, then by being present and part of the community they can begin to shape the conversation and agenda and grow in partnership. As within

organisations, so to within the church, chaplains sometimes need to make their own weather.

- Contribute specialist expertise to local churches and the diocese, for instance within a Learning and Development Programme or within the Major Emergency Plan.
- Share the story of the impact of chaplaincy with the diocese and with local churches.
- Let dioceses know when they arrive and when they leave. (This is especially true for chaplains within HM Forces).

5. National areas for chaplaincy development

The national church has a role to play in enabling chaplaincy development.

- **Vocations and training frameworks and pathways:** There could be more work within the vocational and training frameworks to recognise the distinct vocation to chaplaincy and the vocation that many have to chaplaincy within a wider parish ministry. There is currently a postcode lottery in the recognition of chaplaincy vocations and a regrettably small amount of theological focus on chaplaincy within theological education institutes.
- **Safeguarding:** Though contacted, the National Safeguarding Team offer no resources that we are aware of for a chaplaincy context where the chaplain is working in partnership with their organisation and the diocese and regularly working in the context of major trauma and therefore extreme vulnerability. This important matter needs resourcing.
- **Funding:** Within the new framework there has begun to be central strategic funding for chaplaincy. This is a positive move that we hope will continue.
- **National Church Institutions (NCIs) Chaplaincy Lead:** There are around a dozen brilliant members of staff within the NCIs who have input into chaplaincy vision and strategy and they all bring wisdom to the task. However, they are also pulled in many directions and because there are so many of them, no one person can either give permission or be held accountable. A single named individual, or even a group of two or three, and a small events budget would be a game changer.
- **Chaplaincy Bishop:** There are lead bishops for Prisons, Health and Social Care, Education etc. some of whom have relationships with chaplains within those sectors. Yet their role is for the whole sector. There are thousands of chaplains beyond these sectors. A lead Bishop who would be an advocate for chaplaincy, on a similar model to +Mike Harrison and Pioneering, would be helpful.
- **Diocesan and Sector Chaplaincy Leads:** We hope that this group would continue and work with a Chaplaincy NCI lead and a Bishop for Chaplaincy to help lead the growth of chaplaincy.

6. Summary

The good practice examples in this paper, reinforced by the opportune phrase ‘ecology’, demonstrate the prospective untapped synergy that would likely be released were the CofE to conceive of chaplaincy not merely as a supplementary but rather as an *interrelated* ministry. Our hope is that all chaplains and diocesan clergy will endorse the 2020 Vision and work towards furthering God’s kingdom purposes for the benefit of our nation, its contribution to the wider world, and the growing of vibrant Christian communities.

References

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