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# 3

UNIT THREE

# CHAPLAINCY ESSENTIALS

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## KNOWING WHO YOU ARE

The **Methodist** Church 

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## Worship

Light a candle and focus quietly on the flame: you may also wish to play some reflective music. Reflect on the way that all our eyes are drawn towards the candle flame and the way that God loves us and wants to draw us closer. When you are ready, offer this short reflective prayer:

While this candle burns

o Lord let the candle that we burn here be the light that leads us in our difficult decisions.

Let it be the fire that burns all selfishness, pride and impurity within us.

Let it be that flame that warms our hearts.

We cannot stay long in this place; by letting this candle burn,

it is part of ourselves that we want to give to you.

Help us to carry on our prayer in today's thinking, discussion and activity. Amen.

*Adapted from a church in Colmar, France*

## Review of the previous unit

Report back to the group on one of the tasks from last week either by showing what you have added to your log book or reporting on one of the learning conversations you have had.

## What's in this unit?

### Read

It is part of young adulthood (18-25) to discover who we are and what is our purpose in life. It is a process we revisit regularly in our lives, and it is a good process to remember in the early stages of engagement with chaplaincy. It is good to remember who we are and who we are not and also to remember what we might hope to achieve and what lies beyond the scope of chaplaincy. This unit will explore who you are as a chaplain, how you relate to many different people at many levels of the organisation, and how you develop appropriate relationships around the organisation or institution you are working in.

### Starter activity

You are meeting someone for the first time who has never before met a chaplain and asks you to define in a single sentence what you think chaplaincy is about. Write your sentence down here

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## 1. People – who do you need to know and how do you go about it?

### Read

#### Chaplaincy case study

Deidre was appointed as a university chaplain with extensive pastoral experience but no explicit chaplaincy background. On 1 September, she discussed with her supervisor how they might begin and together they evolved a two part plan. Part 1 was to make a list of all the significant 'top brass' in the university starting with the Vice Chancellor. In the first few days she rang everyone on her list, briefly introducing herself and asking for a 20-minute interview. She drank a lot of coffee and listened a great deal. To every person she asked just one question which was 'Why are you here?' She discovered this was enough to set them going. No one failed to take advantage of the opportunity to talk about themselves and to explain their history, their motivation and their passion.

Part 2 was to get to know as quickly as possible the personnel in security and reception, the porters, caterers and cleaners; to learn as many names as possible and to befriend them. It was a strategy that paid off in spades. By the time students arrived, Deidre was already well established.

#### For discussion

Think about your own situation and how it compares to Deidre's:

- How could this way of starting work for you?
- There are lots of other people in an organisation, why would this approach help to establish you in the whole organisation?
- No one in senior leadership refused Deidre's request for an interview. Why might that be?
- Hardly anyone asked Deidre to talk about herself. Is this surprising and does it matter?

## 2. People – how do you relate to them?

#### One model to consider

Chaplains in the Royal Navy carry no rank and are encouraged to think of themselves, in the moment of conversation, as holding the rank of the person they are talking to. This works really well until they are talking to an admiral! The captain of an aircraft carrier said, "The chaplain is the second most important person on this ship, after me. I will not go to sea without a chaplain."

### For discussion

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Navy model?
- What might the head of an organisation expect from their chaplain?
- What might the store keeper or an administrator or a middle manager expect from a chaplain?
- What does the church expect from you as a chaplain?
- Consider these models of relationship:
  - pastor
  - spiritual advisor
  - emergency welfare worker or stretcher bearer
  - prophet
  - critical friend.
- Suggest some models that could be unwise for a chaplain.

## 3. Tools of the trade - identification

### Read

The joke about ordained ministers is that for any event, there are always two questions: where do we park and what do we wear? Chaplains may not be very different. Although there is more flexibility about matters of dress, you are not, as a chaplain, on your home territory and it may be important to dress in a way that is respectful to your location. Even more important are questions of how you are recognised. This may involve distinctive clothing or a badge or in some circumstances a uniform.



### For discussion

- What is the most helpful way for you to identify yourself in your chaplaincy?
- Is it possible to develop your chaplaincy ministry in such a way that badge and dress are less important?

## 4. Tools of the trade: serendipitous encounter

**Quick quote:** Charlotte Osborne, airport chaplain, speaks of her chaplaincy as: "Listening to the stories of life, telling the stories of faith".

**Read Acts 8:26-39.** Here is a wonderful example of a chaplaincy style encounter.

Consider the following:

- Philip is guided by the Holy Spirit to be on the Gaza road. Sometimes it is important to follow a hunch.
- The Ethiopian is on the journey home from Jerusalem and Philip falls in beside him on the road.
- Philip, in this brief encounter, has the opportunity to explain the scriptures – to be a guide or an interpreter for someone who is questioning.
- Philip is able to proclaim Christ at the heart of all things: the gospel.
- The Ethiopian in classic style is able to respond (Matthew 28:19) and goes on his way.
- We have no clues as to what happens to the Ethiopian after this.

**For discussion**

- What are the practicalities that we can learn from this story as chaplains? Make a list.
- When is it appropriate to share our faith and in what way? (read 1 Peter 3:15-16)
- When should we be careful about sharing our faith in a chaplaincy context?

## 5. Tools of the trade: confidence and mutual respect

**Read**

In the first unit, we thought about what it means for the chaplain to be a guest in a place of many faiths and beliefs. We also need to think about what it means to live with diversity in our chaplaincy teams. Most chaplaincy is done ecumenically but increasingly organisations hosting chaplaincies are seeking to have multi-faith chaplaincy teams. Army chaplaincy talks very clearly about an 'all-souls ministry' by which they mean that a chaplain will speak with every person they encounter with equal respect and dignity regardless of that person's faith background, however different to the chaplain's own. "All faiths and none" is the phrase chaplains often use.

### Chaplaincy case study

A small chaplaincy team, exclusively Christian, decided it was time to expand their number and their range of representation. They wanted to be sure that in their team there were representatives of some smaller denominations, different ethnicities and a range of world faiths. Specifically, they recruited chaplains representative of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

They quickly realised that this changed the landscape considerably. Not only was there a much wider understanding and expectation amongst the Christian chaplains but a whole new range of issues from the world faiths. There were obvious areas of potential conflict around proselytising but not everyone was happy with the nomenclature of chaplain. The new group spent a lot of time defining 'ways of working' and a 'code of practice'. It was important to build up mutual confidence and respect.

### For discussion

- In what sense, if any, do you as a Christian chaplain have a priority in a chaplaincy team?
- Why might host organisations be resistant to active evangelism?
- How do we understand mission and evangelism in a 'no proselytising' environment?
- What principles might be helpful in reaching a way of working that is mutually respectful?  
Read Matthew 7:12 – this might be helpful!
- What might 'all souls ministry' mean in your chaplaincy environment?

## 6. Further reflection

**Either** review and amend your starter definition: what you think chaplaincy is about.

**Or** start from scratch writing a sentence defining for someone with no prior knowledge: *what you think chaplaincy is about* and compare it with your first response. In your prayers in the coming week focus on your calling to be a chaplain. Use the sentences you have written to help you think and pray about what that calling means.

## 7. Putting it into practice

Choose a couple of activities from these alternatives:

- Begin to make a photo directory/collage of your host organisation/location that could be displayed in an appropriate place. Where do you put yourself in this? Maybe a series of selfies with each person?
- Draft an outline Code of Practice for your chaplaincy, covering the important features from your perspective.
- Find a news article about religious intolerance/radicalisation and use it as a starting point for a conversation about what intolerance or hurtful religious speech looks like in your chaplaincy context.
- Arrange to visit a chaplain in another location and maybe another discipline to discuss some of the issues in this session.
- Make a 'chaplaincy kit list': what to take with you to each of your chaplaincy sessions (eg badge or uniform, chaplaincy business cards, key contact numbers). Should you take more, or less?

### A prayer for a chaplaincy conversation

Come Lord Jesus,  
enter into our hearts,  
and in the chaos of confusion,  
in the overflowing of ideas,  
in the echo of emptiness,  
in the peace of enlightenment,  
in the yearning for meaning,  
connect us and encircle us within the light, the passion,  
the stillness of your love.  
We pray in your name, **Amen.**

### Additional Resources

To hear a number of chaplains talking about who they are and how they work in different areas watch the **Chaplaincy** film on the Methodist Church website: [www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy](http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy).

A good example of protocols for chaplains of different faiths working together can be found in the policy documents on the Bristol University Chaplaincy webpages: [www.bristol.ac.uk/chaplaincy/about/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/chaplaincy/about/).

A short article on the Characteristics of Chaplaincy is available in the December 2010 edition of Epworth Review online at: [www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/theology/the-epworth-review](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/theology/the-epworth-review).