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UNIT FOUR

CHAPLAINCY ESSENTIALS

THE CHAPLAIN AND THE CHURCH

The **Methodist** Church 

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Worship

Read this Bible verse out loud and then reflect quietly on it for a few moments.

Bible Verse: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NRSV)

When you are ready, use this prayer or one of your own choosing:

You are the God who has made us with all our differences,
the God who has called us together,
the God who helps us to love each other
and we thank you for your gifts

Be with us now in our meeting, sharing and praying
bless what we have to do and say
make our meeting a time of growth and change
In the Name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Review of previous unit

If you are working in a group each share briefly one insight from the work in your log book since the last unit. If you are working alone make sure that you share your log book regularly with your mentor.

What's in this unit?

Read

The picture shows a chaplain standing in the door of a prison with one foot on the inside and the other on the outside. It is a powerful reminder that chaplains need to stand firmly both in the Church and in the place where they serve.



Because chaplains work beyond the congregation there is a real risk of becoming isolated and in this unit we will think about chaplains as part of the local and wider Church. We need to be supported by the Church but we also need to help more people in the Church understand what we are doing and the ways in which we are finding God in our chaplaincy work. The unit looks at the essential skills we need in reporting back to the Church, at how the Church can support our chaplaincy work, and then invites us to think about chaplaincy and our own discipleship.

1) Keeping in touch – chaplains reporting to the Church

Read

In our chaplaincy work we have wonderful opportunities to discover what God is doing in the world and it is important that we find ways to share these experiences in our churches. Chaplains have many stories to tell, there may be requests for prayer or questions which need wider discussion. Sharing your chaplaincy stories with others will help you to make time to think about what you have been doing and what you have learnt from it. When chaplains regularly share their stories with the Church everyone feels more involved and the work is strengthened.

All chaplains are in some way representatives of the Church and it is also important that our work is overseen by our own churches to ensure that it remains a strong and healthy part of the wider mission and work of the whole Church. Because chaplaincy takes place outside the immediate life of our congregations there is always a danger that it can become 'out of sight and out of mind'. A special responsibility falls on chaplains to make sure that this doesn't happen.

Sometimes reporting needs to be formal (such as reporting to a group who have given a grant for our work), but mostly it is about telling the story of our chaplaincy work. Reports can be imaginative and creative, they don't all have to be the same.

There are many different ways to report back to your local church or Circuit.

Quantitative reporting: in some formal reports we need to literally 'account' for what we have done.

- presenting financial accounts to the local churches to show how the money has been spent
- listing how many events, activities or contacts the chaplaincy has had in the last month/quarter/year
- reporting how members of the chaplaincy team use their chaplaincy time.

Most annual reports contain examples of quantitative reporting.

Qualitative reporting: helps us understand why things happen and what their effect has been, above all for chaplains this will mean telling stories about their work:

- telling stories about your chaplaincy
- leading worship or prayers on a chaplaincy theme
- sharing spiritual insights from your chaplaincy work.

For an example of qualitative reporting, look at some of the chaplaincy stories and pictures you can find in the Chaplaincy Everywhere exhibitions available on the Methodist Church chaplaincy web pages (see Additional Resources).

In the Additional Resources at the end of this unit, you will also find links to the *Mug of Tea Stories* resource for evaluating your chaplaincy through story telling.

Activity

- Think of one story from your chaplaincy work which you would like to share with your church.
- Why is this story important? What does it tell the Church about your chaplaincy work?

Chaplaincy case study

Marion has been invited to join a team of chaplains working with local town centre businesses. Marion is retired and used to work in one of the shops, she already has some experience volunteering with a hospital chaplaincy and so seems an obvious choice to join the team. The chaplaincy is a new venture which has been started by three churches in the centre of the town. The Methodist Church where Marion is a member is not part of this town centre group and she would be the only person from her church on the team. She talks and prays about this with her local minister who encourages her to become involved. The minister thinks that the town centre chaplaincy is an important part of the local Churches mission in the community and wants Marion to help the other Methodist churches know more about the work of the chaplains.

For discussion

- What can Marion do to help the churches understand about the town centre work and her chaplaincy work?
- Are there stories which Marion shouldn't share with the churches and if so why not?
- Can Marion tell stories about individual people she has met? If so how can she take care to protect the privacy of the people in the story?

2) Support from the Church

Read

Chaplaincies come in many different shapes and sizes. They may be organised by a single local church or by a group of churches together. Some will have support from a wider church group such as a circuit, district, diocese, deanery. With so many different denominations and Churches Together groups, it can be quite difficult for chaplains to know how their church supports them in their work. In the Methodist Church there are many people who do chaplaincy – but there is no single status or qualification which makes someone a ‘chaplain’. Chaplains can be local volunteers giving a few hours a month or ordained presbyters who work full time in their chaplaincy role. There are a number of ways in which chaplaincy projects can make sure their volunteers are the right people for this work and are being properly supported by their local churches:

- Asking for references from local church leaders
- Inviting local churches to commission volunteer chaplains in their worship
- Having a probationary period for all new chaplains
- Making sure that local church meetings – (eg church councils and circuit meetings) receive reports about the chaplaincy work.



As well as support from your local church, the wider Church can provide help through networks of chaplains. All Methodist chaplains are encouraged to sign up for our Chaplaincy Everywhere e-newsletter which helps to keep chaplains in touch and provides information about meetings and further training. There are also a number of networks for chaplains who work in different specialist areas. Details are in the Additional Resources section at the end of this unit.

For discussion

- In what ways do your local churches authorise the work of the chaplaincy?
- How does your chaplaincy work receive oversight from the local churches?
- Which church meetings receive reports from your chaplaincy?

Chaplaincy case study (continuing Marion's story)

Marion is the first person from her church to join a new ecumenical chaplaincy team in her local town centre. All the other chaplains are either ordained or have some sort of recognised ministry in their churches – but Marion has no official status and the chaplaincy team wants to know that her own church will support and recognise what she is doing.

For discussion

- What could Marion's church do to show the chaplaincy team that she has their support?
- How do your churches show their support for your chaplaincy work – what else could they do?

3) Further reflection – chaplaincy and discipleship

Prayer

In this unit we have been thinking about the chaplain and the Church and what it means to be supported by our churches and to give back to our churches. Our chaplaincy work doesn't just serve the people we meet; it also helps us to grow as Christians and helps our churches to be more involved with the communities around us. We have also suggested that imaginative reporting helps us to grow because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on our chaplaincy work. We can continue this work of reflection in our own prayer and meditation – being a chaplain must be a part of our discipleship. When we reflect prayerfully on our chaplaincy we are reporting to God. One way to do this might be to use the ancient tradition of self examination in prayer known as the examen. This is the practice of prayerfully reviewing each day, thanking God for its joys, honestly exploring our actions, feelings and motives in all that has happened and seeking the help of the Holy Spirit to grow and change. Here is one way in which you can reflect prayerfully on your chaplaincy work:

- Settle into prayer and become aware of the presence of God.
- Think back over your last chaplaincy session.
- Remember what happened and give thanks.
- Reflect on your feelings and inner motives in your chaplaincy work.
- Remember what you have learnt, about yourself, about others and about God.
- Ask God to help you grow in discipleship through your chaplaincy work.

Putting it into practice:

Before the next session:

- Look at the different "Chaplaincy Activities" on the Methodist Church chaplaincy web pages. www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy. Decide which of these activities best describe your chaplaincy, and see what networks you can join to support your work.

Choose two of the following activities – one from A and one from B. Make notes about what you have learnt from these activities in your chaplaincy log book.

A

- Write a church magazine article about your chaplaincy work.
- Write prayers of intercession for your Sunday service based on your chaplaincy work.

B

- If your local church has an annual commissioning/celebration service for youth workers/pastoral visitors etc, find out if chaplains can be included.
- Invite your local minister/church leader to spend a session with the chaplaincy – and ask them to give feedback both to the chaplaincy team and to the congregation.

Summary prayer:

God of Church and Community you call us all together,
you bind us up in one bundle,
you make us into the Body of Christ.
Help us to listen to one another
hearing, sharing and telling the Good News you give us.
Guide us as we go into your world
to bring blessing and hope.
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Additional Resources:

Telling Stories: The Chaplaincy Everywhere Exhibition www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy/chaplaincy-development-project is a collection of short stories and images from chaplains. The exhibition can be downloaded as either a pdf for printing or a PowerPoint presentation for project.

Mug of Tea Stories: (www.opensourcechaplaincy.org.uk/stories/mot/) offers a simple but rigorous process for gathering stories into a report about your chaplaincy.

Reflections: four short reflections which were originally reports to a Methodist circuit meeting from a local university chaplain can be found on line at www.churchofengland.org/education/colleges-universities/he/chaplaincy-resources/new-chaplains-training.aspx (see bottom of webpage).

Methodist Chaplaincy Networks:

To find out about specialist networks for different kinds of chaplaincy download the General Pack information sheets associated on the Chaplaincy page of the Methodist Church website www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy. Sign up for the Chaplaincy Everywhere e-newsletter at www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/sign-up-for-e-newsletters.

Celebrating Chaplaincy in worship:

Resources for celebrating and commissioning the work of chaplains can be adapted from the Methodist Worship Book service for the annual commissioning of pastoral visitors and class leaders.

The Chaplaincy Service Pack available on the Open Source Chaplaincy website contains examples of material used for worship on a chaplaincy theme. www.opensourcechaplaincy.org.uk