

# CHAPLAINCY EVERYWHERE



## SESSION SEVEN

# Mission Possible: Planning your Chaplaincy Project

A professional approach and thorough planning are essential steps on the journey towards forming a chaplaincy team. This session leads you through the process of creating a framework that will support, enable and establish a new chaplaincy ministry that can last.

# Welcome

---



A professional approach and thorough planning are essential steps on the journey towards forming a chaplaincy team. From approaching an organisation to forming a chaplaincy ministry that will continue to grow and establish itself over the years ahead, there is a lot to consider. This session should be thought of as a guide that will help you to think about how to set up the work in a robust and thorough way. You may want to work through different parts at different times.

How you apply this material is up to your group and largely depends on your circumstances. However, spending time working through these important aspects should be a priority; it is wise to prepare yourself thoroughly before you begin your work as chaplains. Not every section of the materials provided here will be applicable nor right for your circumstances. However, they will get you thinking about what is necessary to support your chaplaincy work and will point you in the right direction.

## Opening Prayer

---



Take a few moments to focus upon God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You might find it helpful to light a candle or play some music.

At an appropriate time, say together the words of the following prayer:

**You are the God who gives the spiritual gift of administration.**

**You are the God who pays attention to the details.**

**You are the God who builds things to last.**

**So be with us now as we consider holy things.**

**Guide us in our deliberations and our conversations:**

**knowing that these important preparations can protect the ministry of chaplaincy.**

**We ask that you will bless our efforts.**

**That your will be done as your kingdom reaches to the ends of the earth.**

**In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

# A Starter for Ten

---



*Chaplaincy Everywhere* aims to promote the very best examples of chaplaincy. What you will find in this course are highlights from many conversations about how to approach chaplaincy and develop chaplaincy teams. One of our values is to be open in the way we share material with others. Resources for effective chaplaincy work can be found on our website ([www.methodist.org.uk/chaplaincy](http://www.methodist.org.uk/chaplaincy)) including an example job description, person specification, safeguarding resources and application forms. You are encouraged to customise these resources for your own purposes.

There are likely to be things that we haven't yet included in our resources that should be included. In the spirit of the open source movement, if you have an insight to share, then send it to us and we will endeavour to include it on our website.

All of the forms, examples and topics included in this session are here for a very important reason. It is strongly advised to think about these issues before you begin any chaplaincy work, and certainly before their absence causes problems.

## Planning Structure



This session deals with five distinct areas in planning chaplaincy work. It is not necessary to cover all topics in one meeting, but consideration of these areas will help ensure your chaplaincy project is thought-through and well-planned. The five areas are:

1. Your mission context
2. Negotiating access
3. Building a team
4. Developing skills and knowledge
5. Commissioning chaplaincy teams

# 1. Your mission context

Many local churches are part of wider structures. Within the Methodist Church for instance a local church will be part of a local circuit (group of geographically similar churches) who in turn will be part of a district (a large geographical region). Many churches, circuits and districts will have their own mission strategies written down and available online, and often in paper form too.

These documents are important declarations of intent and indicate where resources of time, energy, finance and prayer are allocated as Christian groups work out their stated aims and values.

Chaplaincy is a vital part of the church's call and it is important that your chaplaincy project is part of your church's or group of churches' mission. It should not be something separate or additional. It is key that your project is fully part of the life of your local church or churches. This may mean engaging with church leaders to ensure it is seen and embraced as an opportunity for mission. Many churches have mission plans and it would be a good idea to ensure that your chaplaincy work is part of this mission plan. Working together, as members of the body of Christ, is key to ensuring collaboration in ministry.

*Chaplaincy Everywhere* has developed the following statement that can be used by local churches, circuits, districts, parishes, diocese, networks, churches together or similar in order to focus thinking around lay chaplaincy:

**Local, congregation-led chaplaincy is one of the most effective ways to collaborate in God's mission in the world; local people responding to local needs over time can change the church and the world!**

- **Discuss:** How will you ensure that your chaplaincy project is embraced by the wider church community?



.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 2. Negotiating access

In the previous session, we ended by thinking about how you might begin to answer the question any organisation will ask: 'Why do we need a chaplain?'

It is an important question to consider before you continue. You will find it useful to reflect on your approach as you make a phone call or draft an email or letter to an organisation. What happens during your initial approach to an organisation is likely to have the biggest impact upon the shape of the chaplaincy in the years to come. It is worth spending some time getting this right. Review the previous sessions as you go through this exercise. Some of the headings and points in the conclusions may help you describe what you are offering as a chaplain or chaplaincy team.

In certain settings it may be appropriate to develop a chaplaincy agreement with a particular organisation. Verbal agreements are good, however, managers often change and having a formal written agreement can often protect chaplaincy as a negotiated presence.

- **What things do you need to consider as you approach your chosen organisation? What are the key points you need to make about your offer of chaplaincy?**



.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 3. Building a team

As the team of people engaging in this course, you are the foundation to building a chaplaincy team. Some of you may have felt strongly called to be chaplains in this project; others may feel they can offer other skills and gifts to the project. This is where prayerful discernment is key. It is time to discern, discuss and decide what roles are needed and what people you have in the team. Naturally, chaplains are key to a chaplaincy project, but so are administrators or people who can use social media.

- **Discuss:** What different roles are required for your chaplaincy work to be a success?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Once you have begun making decisions about who will be involved in what way, it's time to look at what other people might need to be involved too. This is where recruitment is key. It's good to build a team of chaplains for your project. This helps to ensure you have capacity to engage with your chosen location, and makes sure the project has longevity when people move on.

### **Recruitment: what are you looking for in a chaplain?**

Forming a team is one thing: making sure the right people are part of that team is another thing entirely. Very often, within recruitment, we associate the word 'voluntary' with an approach that accepts anyone who turns up. This should certainly not be the case. A voluntary team needs to be carefully chosen and supported in the most professional way. From the advert to the application form, from gathering references to conducting an interview – even if it is a conversation over a coffee – getting the right people on board is a crucial step in the process of forming a team that will last and work together well to share and fulfil the vision.

A rigorous application process might seem like overkill. On the other hand, a process that helps potential lay chaplains to consider their calling and take time to fill out an application form will aid the discernment process.

Without being overly dramatic, there are two things to bear in mind. Firstly, many people want to feel significant and may feel that being a part of the latest initiative will validate them as a person. You need to protect the work from people who want to be involved for the wrong reasons. The recruitment stage is your boundary.

Secondly, it only takes one incident with one member of the chaplaincy team to compromise months, even years, of hard work. It only takes one negative article in the local newspaper to undo an excellent reputation. Getting the right people, with the right character and motives, who will work within a clear set of guidelines will protect the chaplaincy work in the years ahead. **Do not shortcut this process.**

### **Role description**

Well-written role descriptions are essential for anyone engaged in ongoing work. To know what to do and what not to do establishes important boundaries that allow people to thrive. They also protect volunteers from a lack of focus.

The best role descriptions focus a person's time and energy well but also give room for someone to bring their own unique enthusiasm and gifts to the work. In that way, a great role description allows room and flexibility for the people involved in the role to grow themselves and to develop the role. Chaplaincy lends itself to this.

The right person will not only own the role but also protect the work and take it in exciting new directions. So spend time writing a great role description! Feel free to use the templates on the Methodist website as a starting point, but be open to rewording, taking out and adding things as you seek God's perspective on what the role is and what it might become over time.



[methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers](https://methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers)

## Person specification

Every situation calls for something different. Chaplaincy responds to circumstances. However, there are traits and attributes which apply to chaplaincy as a general discipline. Some people are very well suited to chaplaincy. Others might be better suited to being part of a support group. For others, it may be more appropriate for them to pursue alternative work. The person specification provides a general picture of what is required.

## Pastoral reference

A chaplain who represents Christ and the local/national Church should be in good relationship with the local Christian community. A pastoral reference should be submitted as evidence of this, along with the statutory DBS check. A reference from a church leader should be seen as not only a precaution but also a symbol of the local church taking responsibility for the chaplaincy that happens in their area. The pastoral references should be from the local church leadership, elder, pastor etc.

## Application form

Good processes and procedures help to shape a professional chaplaincy ministry. Application forms are an opportunity to gather important information that helps with administration such as home address, contact details and next of kin in case of emergencies. A good application form also provides an opportunity to ask important questions tied in to the job description such as 'why do you feel God is calling you to be involved in the ministry of chaplaincy?' and 'how could you see the role developing?'

Questions such as these help those gathering a team to discern whether the applicant has the right perspective and motivation for applying; they also help those applying to carefully consider why they want to be involved in chaplaincy. Soul searching at this point will prevent awkward and difficult conversations further down the line.

## Safeguarding/DBS

Local churches approach safeguarding in different ways. Having said that, undergoing DBS checks in England and Wales, Disclosure Scotland checks in Scotland or Access NI checks in Northern Ireland, and giving ongoing training in the areas of child protection and working with vulnerable adults is an essential part of a healthy church (see [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service)). Chaplains must submit themselves to local protocols as those who are likely to meet vulnerable people.

Equally, chaplaincy is conducted in public spaces and, as those who will be clearly identified as chaplains, it is important to protect yourself.

## The ongoing nature of recruitment!

Growing an effective team is an essential and ongoing part of any chaplaincy work. As the work grows and people move on, you will need to continue to recruit people. There are three important things to remember as you recruit a team and continue the search for the right people.

Firstly, you need to spread your net far and wide and be very clear about what you are looking for. It is important that people know what it is you are asking them to do and it is worth forwarding a catchy and concise advert to every church in the area. A lay chaplaincy team is a ministry that can unite churches.

Secondly, many people who would be ideal for the role of chaplain probably won't put themselves forward. This is where key leaders in the life of the local church need to be part of the recruiting team. Be on the lookout for people who fit the person specification well. You will no doubt think of people who might be very well suited to a particular chaplaincy team or situation, so approach them.

The most effective recruitment happens when you make an approach to a person and ask them to consider being part of a team. Encouragement by a third party is often the thing that helps people think of themselves as a potential team member. It is essential that a volunteer is not pressured into applying though – recruiting volunteers is always an open invitation and saying no is always an option!

Thirdly, it is important to be realistic about voluntary work. Life circumstances can change very quickly and a team of ten can soon shrink to five or six over the course of a year. It is therefore essential to understand that recruitment is an ongoing activity when it comes to volunteers. Be constantly aware of potential people who could join the team if needed, and be sympathetic towards team members who might need a break for a while or need to concentrate on something else. Keep a list of those people who mentioned that it wasn't the right time two years ago. Likewise, keep a list of those who were declined two years ago because you didn't feel it was the right time – their time might be now!

One practical thing you can establish is to run the *Chaplaincy Everywhere* course twice a year: once during Lent and another during the autumn term. The course can function as a way of keeping chaplaincy in the mind of local Christians as well as providing a steady stream of volunteers, either to replace those who have moved on or in order to grow the team. After all, a town chaplaincy team with 20 volunteers could have a significant impact in an area!

## 4. Developing skills and knowledge

Chaplaincy isn't only about the people and community that you are reaching; being involved in chaplaincy also helps to develop the skills and giftings of those working in the team. Through ongoing support and training, volunteers can grow themselves as they serve others.

### Practical guidelines

Chaplaincy is a practical ministry and many lessons, tips and tricks have been learnt over the years. Useful reading, resources and training links can be found in the Chaplaincy section of the Methodist website.

### 'What makes a good chaplain?'

Chaplains need to be competent in a number of key areas. *What makes a good chaplain?* sets out the core skills of a chaplain and might provide a structure for ongoing training. The themes covered set out the skills, attitudes and understanding that a chaplain should seek to develop as they go about their work now and in the future.



[methodist.org.uk/  
chaplaincy](https://methodist.org.uk/chaplaincy)



## Chaplaincy visit

One worthwhile activity you may wish to organise as your work and team develops, is a trip to visit a local chaplain. You may know of someone who is a chaplain in your region who would be willing to host you for an hour or two. They will be a great source of stories and wisdom. If you do not know of a local chaplain, then get in touch with Methodist Chaplaincies ([chaplaincies@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:chaplaincies@methodistchurch.org.uk)) and we can help you find someone who will be willing to host you. If it is not appropriate for you to visit them, it is quite likely that they will be happy to come and visit you and share from their experience.

## Ongoing training and development

Lifelong learning is an important aspect of Christian discipleship. You may want to encourage the chaplaincy team to gain specific experience and training in some of the following practical areas. These themes will certainly form the beginnings of a training skills pathway for chaplaincy.

- A theology of visiting
- Loss and grieving
- Listening skills
- Confidentiality
- Bereavement

Reading, resources and links can be found at: [www.methodist.org.uk/chaplaincy](http://www.methodist.org.uk/chaplaincy)

## 5. Commissioning chaplaincy teams

A commissioning service is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate chaplaincy and to pray for the work. Consider an ecumenical commissioning service. The Methodist website has a number of liturgies which might be a suitable starting point to develop an appropriate service.



[methodist.org.uk/  
additionalmethodistliturgies](http://methodist.org.uk/additionalmethodistliturgies)

## Conclusion

---

As you can see, there are many things to consider. Sadly, so many great ideas fail to make it past the administrative stage because a long list of things to do can seem intimidating to many. However, as this session has identified, working as a team and identifying where people's skills lie is the key to success. Someone with the gift of administration should lead on the practical tasks of getting systems and structures in place.

We hope that what has been presented here, rather than seeming overwhelming, has enabled and empowered you. Our online resources will help you to move forward.

# Prayers and Dismissal

---



**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

(From the *Methodist Worship Book*, NRSV)

**You are blessed to be a blessing.  
Therefore, go into all the world to be good news.  
To bless a world in need of love, attention and care.  
May your chaplaincy ministry grow and flourish.  
May others receive you into their community.  
May you be known for your love and good deeds.  
So, may the Father's love fill you.  
May the Son's example inspire you.  
And may the Spirit's life empower you.  
In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**