



CHAPLAINCY EVERYWHERE

A SMALL GROUP RESOURCE FOR
NURTURING ENGAGEMENT IN GOD'S
MISSION THROUGH CHAPLAINCY

The **Methodist** Church 

Forewarned

The journey you are about to embark upon is a pathway towards deepening your engagement in God's mission. Over the coming weeks we will cover a lot of ground together by first placing chaplaincy within the larger context of God's mission in the world. We will then focus on the life of Jesus Christ and the growth of the early Church in order to understand the character of chaplaincy. Having placed chaplaincy in context and identified some of the core values of chaplaincy, we will get into the details of what chaplains actually do. Finally, we will begin to focus on what chaplaincy might look like in your own community and how you might go about actually doing it.

Chaplaincy is about being available to others in the places they gather: in work places and leisure spaces, in centres of learning and communities of healing. In the varied places that people go about their lives outside of our church communities you will often find chaplains; at the heart of communities and often on the edges too. Chaplaincy is rooted in real life; being present to others in good times and bad times, bringing love, hope, understanding and peace. Chaplaincy is about getting on people's level and walking alongside them for a short while or over many years. Not only that, but chaplaincy looks different in different places; that is the beauty of this responsive ministry, it responds to people and places.

The Chaplaincy Everywhere Course sprang from the realisation that if the Methodist Church wanted to see chaplaincy everywhere, then there was a need for accessible materials that can take a disciple of Jesus Christ from being interested in the ministry of chaplaincy to being engaged in the ministry of chaplaincy; actually doing it or helping to make it happen.

Although this material can be read on your own and be of some benefit, it has been designed to be used in groups of three or more. This is deliberate, because we believe that chaplaincy, even if practiced by one person, needs a team around it to support the work and allow it to grow.

The second reason for designing this material to be used in small groups is because we meet far too many chaplains who find themselves isolated from the local church, very much on the edge of its community. We believe that future forms of chaplaincy should emerge from the heart of a congregation, be deeply understood and seen as a core aspect of Church life and that chaplains should be well supported and cared for.

With this in mind, we pray that you will benefit from these thoughts and reflections in the coming weeks. Moreover, we pray that those reflections will find an expression in your community in the form of chaplaincy. You have been forewarned: the Chaplaincy Everywhere Course might just change the world, but it will almost certainly change your world!

In Christ,

The Chaplaincy Team

Discipleship and Ministries Cluster | Methodist Connexional Team

Introduction to the course

We want you to get the most out of this course! Reading this introduction before you meet for the first session will not only help you prepare for what is to come, but will help the group to function well so that every member is able to grow and enjoy the sessions. As a member of this group, you become a collaborator; a participant in a process of deep reflection, meaningful conversation and effective action.

It is only right that we warn you at the start that this course isn't supposed to be easy, instead, it will prepare you for the ministry of chaplaincy. There are Bible passages to study, questions to consider, concepts to work through and conversations to have; hopefully as a result of all that, there will be ongoing action that changes your community in a lasting way. This course is all about collaborating in God's mission which means that you are not alone; a good place to begin!

Developing chaplaincy

Context is one of the most important considerations when thinking about engaging in God's mission. The ministry of chaplaincy is the ultimate responsive ministry as we will see in the coming weeks. This course is a resource that springs out of the Chaplaincy Development Project, which is a bold and daring initiative of the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

The Chaplaincy Development Project was established in early 2011 to promote *chaplaincy everywhere*. Not just individual chaplains, but teams of chaplains who are members of the local church, embedded in their community. Our primary focus is to encourage, resource and equip local, voluntary chaplains; people who might give a few hours on a regular basis to be present in a specific place in an ongoing way. This material is designed to help small groups respond to the Methodist vision, to be a "discipleship movement shaped for mission". We believe that chaplaincy is a powerful response to that vision and provides both the understanding and the skills needed to respond to the mission of God wherever you find yourself.

Overview of each week

The Chaplaincy Everywhere Course takes place over seven sessions. Below is an overview of each session.

Week one: caught up in the mission of God

To be the missional people of God means that we are caught up in God's mission of renewal and re-creation. God's mission is the context for everything that follows as we consider the ministry of chaplaincy in the twenty first century. Session one explores God's mission and our part in it as recipients and collaborators.

Week two: as Christ in the world

The coming of the eternal Son to earth in the person of Jesus Christ changes everything. This session focuses on his life, death and resurrection and how the significant themes of incarnation, sacrifice and witnessing to the risen Christ shape our understanding and expression of chaplaincy.

Week three: the Spirit of chaplaincy

The ascension of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost gives birth to the Church as both a recipient and collaborator in God's mission. This session explores some of the chaplaincy themes we observe as the early Church, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, continues the ministry of Jesus in the world.

Week four: the cloak of chaplaincy

Martin of Tours saw a scantily clad beggar in need of shelter and so he cut his own cloak in half and shared it with the man. Martin became known as the first chaplain. This session explores the sacrificial, caring and compassionate aspects of chaplaincy in the world. It will draw together some of the foundational values of chaplaincy as we consider how chaplains are called to be in places away from our church buildings.

Week five: what chaplains do; bringing it all together

This session draws together many of the themes from the previous four sessions in order to provide a rich description of chaplaincy. We will hear four chaplaincy stories which are based upon real life examples and draw out some practical tips. We will also consider the extra dimension that chaplains often bring to a place or situation.

Week six: chaplaincy here in today's world; a look at our context

The world around us is forever changing; chaplaincy is a highly responsive ministry! This session will help you take a fresh look at your local community as you ask the question: where might God be calling us to engage? This is a mapping exercise that might lead you to some unexpected conclusions.

Week seven: what? when? where? job descriptions and other essentials

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.

How to use this material

Every group is different and will want to use the material in different ways; this is expected and to be encouraged.

Many groups will want to work through the material as it is presented. Each week is designed to flow seamlessly; simply follow the material through as instructed.

Other groups may feel constricted by that approach. You may wish to encourage people to read the material through before each session so that you can have an extended conversation based upon the questions asked.

You may be in a group that prefers to read sections quietly rather than out loud and then talk about what you have read using the questions as a starting point for conversation.

You may want to approach each week differently! Whatever you do, don't feel bound to the material. As long as the end result is a better understanding of chaplaincy, the material will have served its purpose.

What is required...

Having said that, there are some important caveats!

Every member needs their own copy of the material

Firstly, every member of the group must have their own copy of the material. The material includes space to make notes and so it is important that each member can jot down thoughts and answers to questions in the spaces provided. Some members will want read through the notes before each session in preparation, others will want to review the sessions in the future; we hope that the course will be an invaluable resource for you.

Peer led

Secondly, the material is designed to be peer led, which means that each week should ideally be facilitated by a different person. It is important to designate a person to be the facilitator for each particular session! The facilitator is responsible for guiding the group through the material each week; reading introductory sections, inviting members to read various sections and Bible readings. The facilitator will also ask various questions at different times as well as provide time for prayers, pauses and group activities. Importantly, the facilitator needs to keep an eye on the clock, making sure that the group doesn't get bogged down on a particular point.

The material clearly identifies what is required during each section and leads the participants quite naturally. Our hope then is that the leadership and responsibility might be shared and that learning, planning and action might become a collaborative experience.

You need to bring a Bible

Thirdly, the first three sessions take the form of Bible studies, in fact, most of the sessions refer to Bible passages at some point. It is important that each member brings a Bible with them. We have not specified a particular version to use during this course. A variety of versions only enriches the studies, as different versions bring different perspectives. Where Bible verses are included in the material we have noted which versions they come from.

An evening together

Fourthly, each session is designed to fill an evening. Of course, groups work through material at different paces depending on the group size and the variance in reading speed. With that in mind, we have erred on providing more material than you will probably need. We would rather provide too much material than too little! Again, the facilitator needs to bear that in mind and be willing to skip sections if time runs away from you. Encourage the members of the group to go back over the material in their own time.

Whatever happens, the prayers are provided to signify the beginning and end of each session and our hope is that all the conversations you have together happen within this context of worship.

The final word

Lastly, it is important to emphasise that we don't expect you to agree with everything that has been written! The material is supposed to stimulate and challenge but we do not suppose that what we have written is the final word on chaplaincy! We all look through a glass darkly and so offer this material to the Church in the spirit of humility. Our hope is that the material serves as a prompt for you to engage with God and mission!

Who is this course for?

Chaplains come in all shapes and sizes, there is certainly no one way of doing it. You don't need a degree or a clerical collar. Chaplaincy is for everywhere and for everyone. However, that doesn't mean that everyone might be a chaplain for it is also certainly a calling. Our hope is that this course will help you to respond to God's calling, whether that be specifically as a chaplain, as an encourager or as someone who supports chaplaincy. You may find that chaplaincy isn't what God is calling you to at this time, our hope is that this course will help you discern exactly what God is calling you to; be open to every possibility.

The group will therefore be comprised of people who are at different stages in that journey. That is expected and to be welcomed, the group will become a community of learning and exploration and hopefully a support and encouragement to one another.

The group may be formed of people who feel drawn towards chaplaincy of some kind and a few others who might become a support group for the chaplain. This is also to be encouraged. The group might be formed of a number who feel a call to form a chaplaincy team to a specific place, whether that be a local shopping centre, school, or to a local factory.

For some people undertaking this course, you might have never considered the ministry of chaplaincy as something you could do; thinking perhaps, that it is the work of ordained ministers in prisons, hospitals or military service. However, you are curious to learn more about chaplaincy and even more curious after learning that chaplaincy is something that you might be able to do. This course will provide the framework and some of the tools to become reflective practitioners: chaplains.

Some of you may already function in the ministry of chaplaincy or have done so in the past. It is always good to refresh your knowledge and hopefully, something covered here will help you understand what you do with even more clarity.

Others still, might want to support chaplaincy and form part of a support group. It is important that a support group grasps what the ministry of chaplaincy might entail. In this way, a culture of chaplaincy within our churches will be encouraged. We hope that you will become an advocate for chaplaincy everywhere!

Intentionality

Chaplaincy is an intentional act. It requires discipline, action and organisation. Intentionally being present to others is one of the most important aspects of the work. Being present to others means that we notice them, listen to them and remember what they have said, holding others in our thoughts and prayers.

Being present to one another during this course is an important aspect of the experience. Too often, our Christian discipleship can be a solitary journey. However, chaplains are companions on other people's journeys. Therefore, we encourage you to travel through this time together; talking, thinking, praying and acting together in community. It requires us to be intentional. It requires us to be vulnerable. It requires us to be selfless. These too are key qualities of chaplains.

Character formation

In that sense, this course is not only meant to stimulate your minds and imaginations but to stimulate your character too. Christian formation is at the heart of this course. Developing the qualities of a chaplain is a lifelong task and you probably have a number of those qualities already in abundance! However, as you think about the values and characteristics of chaplaincy, open your mind, heart, spirit and strength to God's Spirit; asking him to shape and deepen your experience.

Be encouraged

From the outset, we want to say that this material springs out of lived experience. It is not abstract and theoretical but grounded in reality and draws upon the stories and reflections of real chaplains doing real work in many different places.

We also want to encourage you that this material reflects the ways in which we as Chaplaincy Development Project Officers have worked with churches around the country. We want to encourage you that this stuff really works. New chaplains, in real situations can be an outcome of this journey. Be open to the possibilities and invite God to inhabit not only your meetings but also the process as you work with us to see chaplaincy everywhere!

Thank you!

Thank you for participating in this course. We pray that it will not only be a wonderful inspiration, but a time of deepening faith that will lead to action.

The Chaplaincy Team

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