

IMAGE: ©PHOTOS.COM



INTRODUCTION

CHAPLAINCY ESSENTIALS

A RESOURCE FOR NURTURING CHAPLAINS IN THE
ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR THEIR WORK

The **Methodist** Church 

©Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes 2015. Registered charity no. 1132208

Course outline

Introduction	Please read this first	Course outline; About the course; Using the course; Running the sessions; Before You begin.
Unit 1	Being a guest	Learning how to be a guest within the organisation which hosts the chaplaincy.
Unit 2	Knowing where you are	The first of two orientation units on learning to understand the host organisation or community where we are chaplains. Focuses on learning about the physical environment, organisation and culture, and on working safely.
Unit 3	Knowing who you are	The second orientation unit concentrates on understanding our role and how to meet and make relationships with people in the host organisation.
Unit 4	The chaplain and the Church	Learning about reporting to the Church, being commissioned and receiving oversight.
Unit 5	Listening and caring	A brief introduction to the pastoral role of the chaplain.
Unit 6	Prophecy and presence	Understanding ethical challenges and the role of the chaplain as a Christian presence.
Beyond Essentials	Handout sheet	Resources and ideas for taking things further.

About the course

Welcome to Chaplaincy Essentials. Although we describe the six units which follow as a 'course', they are not meant as a qualification for chaplains to complete, but a resource to help develop the essential skills of chaplaincy work. The units have been written with new chaplains in mind, but those with more experience in chaplaincy work should also find here ideas which will stimulate new conversations and new learning. The Methodist Church wants to offer a Learning Pathway for chaplains. This means drawing together the best resources, training and development available so that chaplains can continue to grow whatever their level of experience. Chaplaincy Essentials and its partner course Chaplaincy Everywhere are an important part of that pathway.

We hope that this course will help you grow not just in your chaplaincy work but also as a disciple of Jesus. Our chaplaincy development work in the Methodist Church has taught us that God can use chaplaincy to shape and form in a least three ways:

- chaplains bring change to the places where they work by being signs of Good News
- chaplains bring change to their churches where they encourage congregations to look outwards and share in the excitement of God's mission
- chaplains are themselves changed by the work they do, growing and learning as disciples of Jesus¹.

¹Sue Porter and Beth Tarleton, *Methodist Chaplaincy Development using the Mug of Tea Stories Methodology* (unpublished report 2012)

Chaplaincy Essentials and Chaplaincy Everywhere

In 2012 the Methodist Church produced Chaplaincy Everywhere, a small group resource for nurturing engagement in God's mission through chaplaincy. Chaplaincy Everywhere was written for people who were thinking about chaplaincy and exploring what it might mean in their community. This course explores some of the same themes but it is written for a different group of people, those who have already begun chaplaincy work and are looking to develop the essential skills for being a chaplain. If you have not yet started chaplaincy work then it would help to look at Chaplaincy Everywhere first.

1) A practical course

In preparing this course, we asked some chaplaincy teams what kind of training material they find helpful. Their answer was that material should be practical, using case studies and introducing ideas for chaplains to explore in their work. We have used words and pictures to describe real chaplaincy situations for you to think and talk about; at the end of each unit you will find the challenge and the invitation of Putting It Into Practice. It is in following and reflecting on these practical exercises that the most important learning will take place.

2) A spiritual course

The Chaplaincy Everywhere course begins in the Bible and helps us to see how chaplaincy is an important part of what God is doing in the world. In *Essential Skills* you will find less Bible study, but more suggestions for how your chaplaincy work is linked with your life of prayer and worship. We hope that this will help you to go on growing as a disciple and a chaplain.

3) A group course

One of the themes you will find running through the course is the importance of keeping chaplaincy closely linked to the life of the Church. There is always a danger of chaplains feeling isolated from the Church together with a temptation to do things alone. The best way to use this course is as a group within a local chaplaincy team where there are different levels of experience. If you need to use the course as an individual, you will find some suggestions to help you in the section on Using the Course.

4) A course, not a qualification

Being a chaplain is something that you do; there is no single qualification or training which can automatically make someone into a chaplain. This is a course to help those who are new to chaplaincy as they develop, grow and gain experience. It is also a resource for those who are more experienced in chaplaincy, to help them go on reflecting and learning from one another. We hope that the resources will make you more confident in your chaplaincy work and as a member of your chaplaincy team.

5) A Flexible Resource

In the section on Using the Course you will find a number of suggestions for different ways to run your course. Please approach this material flexibly, remembering that all groups and individuals have different needs and different styles of learning. Some groups will find that there is more material in each unit than they can comfortably cover in a single session. This is quite deliberate and allows you to make a selection. In some cases we have tried to cover the same issue in different ways to allow for different styles of learning. Some may prefer to read text; some a written exercise, some a discussion; others only learn by trying it out in practice.

6) An invitation to go further

We have tried to keep this course short; after all it is about essentials. With more and more courses and qualifications for chaplains available we hope that you will be encouraged to continue to grow in your chaplaincy work. A short list of additional Resources at the end of each unit will give some ideas for the next steps you could take, and there is a handout – Beyond Essentials - with suggestions for how to take things further at the end of the course. God always has more to show us and new ways for us to serve.

Using the course

There are a number of ways in which this course can be used. In the end it is a resource to support your training needs and you may need to be selective in which material you use. In most cases there is probably more material in each unit than you can use in a single two-hour session, so please do not be afraid to concentrate on the ideas and exercises which are going to help most in your chaplaincy. This is a training resource and not a qualification, there is no requirement to cover everything!

Although the material is laid out to offer six group sessions, this can be changed to meet the particular needs of your own chaplaincy.

We suggest that there are five main ways to work through the course:

Path 1) Six group meetings

The material has been laid out to provide six sessions each of which can be covered by a small group in an evening meeting of about two hours. If possible include both new and more experienced chaplains in the group. This will help you achieve three things:

- having enough people to make a strong group
- linking new chaplains to more experienced mentors
- adding your own chaplaincy experience to the resources in the course.

In between meetings there are a number of practical exercises to try out in your chaplaincy work and everyone is invited to keep a Chaplain's Log of their experiences

Path 2) Combining training days and group meetings

The first three units could be used as a single orientation day introducing new chaplains to the chaplaincy and their role within it:

- Unit 1 Being a guest
- Unit 2 Knowing where you are
- Unit 3 Knowing who you are

The remaining three units cover more specific areas of chaplaincy work and could follow as a series of evening meetings or be expanded into further training days over a period of time.

Path 3) Two or three training days

It is possible to divide the whole course into two intensive training days:

Day One: Orientation

- Unit 1 Being a guest
- Unit 2 Knowing where you are
- Unit 3 Knowing who you are

Day Two: Areas of work

- Unit 4 The Chaplain and the Church
- Unit 5 Listening and caring
- Unit 6 Prophecy and presence

If units are clustered together like this it is important to find ways to follow some of the practical exercises over a longer period of time. For example, new chaplains could be linked to a mentor for a period of some weeks during which they reflect on their experience and work through some of the practical tasks in the units. Making this time of mentoring into a probationary period will help to build confidence in the quality of your work as chaplains.

Path 4) Working independently with a mentor

There may be only one person in your chaplaincy team who is ready to work through this course. Please do not be put off by everything we have said about groups. We have tried to write the resources in such a way that you can work through the units on your own, provided that you have a mentor to support you. In many of the activities you will be asked to make notes about your experiences and learning in your Chaplain's Log. If you need to work alone on the course it is particularly important that you share these notes with your mentor. This could mean a face to face meeting, or keeping a digital log and sharing this with your mentor, or a combination of the two.

Path 5) Occasional training days

Although Chaplaincy Essentials has been written with new chaplains in mind some of the material could be used in occasional training days for a whole chaplaincy team. The conversation starters and exercises are based on real life chaplaincy scenarios and offer a good way of starting learning conversations between chaplains. Each unit ends with some additional resources which you can follow up and we have also included Beyond Essentials - an information sheet about where to look if you want to take things further.

Running the sessions

Whether you cover the course in short evening sessions or through longer training days Chaplaincy Essentials is all about conversations. There are no experts in this course – everyone is expecting to learn from each other. Here are a few suggestions for the resources you will need and some of the ways in which you can help this learning from one each other to take place:

What is required

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 to 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 unit could 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.

Time together

Thirdly, each session is designed to be about two hours long. Of course, groups work through material at different paces depending on the group size and the ways in which people read through and talk about the material. 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 mark the beginning and end of each session and our hope is that all the conversations you have together happen within this context of worship.

In between the meetings

Because this is a resource to help to help chaplains grow in confidence and learn essential skills there is a lot of practical work to be done. At the end of each unit you will find a selection of activities. Some of these are very straightforward and can be done at your own convenience (such as writing an article for your church magazine or searching for some information on the internet), some are ideas to try out in your regular chaplaincy sessions and others will need some preparation and can't easily be done between one weekly meeting and the next. You will need to look at the activities together during your meeting. There are plenty of choices, so try to encourage everyone to decide what they

are going to do before leaving the meeting. Share your choices with each other and report back at a future meeting, this will help you to encourage one another.

Chaplain's log

We strongly recommend that you keep a log of your learning throughout the course. This might be a folder or in a digital form, but the simplest way is just to give everyone an exercise book to write in. The Log is not a diary in which everything is recorded, but rather a place where you gather together your discoveries about chaplaincy. Keeping a log will make it much easier to talk with other members of the group and your mentor about what you have been doing. It will help you to see what you are learning in your chaplaincy work and give you something to look back at later.

Before you begin...

Lastly, it is important to emphasise that we don't expect you to agree with everything that has been written. You might have wanted to see a different selection of Essentials. The material covers just a few of the fundamental skills of chaplaincy work 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!

Chaplaincy Essentials Writing Team

January 2015