



*A Training Course for Christian Chaplains working
in Further and Higher Education*



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Introduction

Welcome to the four module course: Further and Higher, designed to give you an introduction to chaplaincy in the context of Further Education.

It is an introductory course designed to help you to gain an understanding of the nature of FE chaplaincy and the skills needed to serve well in that role. The four modules will help you to develop your understanding of the role and offer opportunities for reflection.

Depending on the option you choose there will be varying levels of assessment which will aid your reflective practice and build your confidence that you are able to work in accordance with accepted working standards. On completion, if you want to continue learning, you could do on to gain a more formal chaplaincy qualification. A list of courses available can be found on the [chaplaincy hub](#) of the free churches group website.

Please note: This handbook is designed to supplement the teaching within the videos and any online tutorials. The handbook alone is not sufficient content to begin your journey into chaplaincy. We hope you find the video content interesting and beneficial on your journey. There is also a reader's pack with supplementary materials on the Saint Peter's Saltley website.

We recognise that there are a **variety of roles within FE chaplaincy** including:

- ” Lead chaplain/team leader
- ” Assistant chaplain
- ” Chaplaincy volunteer

Your choice of pathway may well be determined by the role you currently play or are hoping for as a chaplain. We encourage you to apply these teaching modules in your setting, as you reflect on your own work whilst you progress through this training course.

You'll see at the end of each session, there are some questions for you to reflect on and some further reading. We encourage you to use these opportunities to develop your thinking further. Some of the readings are taken from Nigel Robert's book: The Good Chaplain. Other readings are available in the 'readings' folder on the course website. And some will be available online. Whilst we encourage you to engage with these, they are optional extras to the core course materials.

Module 1:

Foundations

Session 1: Theologies of Chaplaincy

It is my experience that often people start in their chaplaincy role by thinking what can they do, what can they offer or even: what can they get away with? Once they have established their practice they then turn to the question of reflecting on what theology could be linked to or underpin their practice. I suggest that this is the wrong way round when considering the ministry of chaplaincy. We need to start with our theology. What do I believe about my role, what is its biblical foundation and how does that impact my identity, my offer, my practice. By starting with our theology, we ensure that any work we undertake has integrity. So, before you start in any chaplaincy role, it is vital to ensure that any work is founded upon a workable theology. Without that rootedness in Scripture any enterprise will run out of steam and fail in the longer term.

There is no overarching theology of chaplaincy, though there are many interlinked concepts. This is especially true when it comes to a theology of chaplaincy in education with its contextual challenges.

The Good Chaplain²⁹ book examines a number of theologies that have been put forward over the past few years and argues that there can be a unifying theology when it is based around the ministry model of Jesus.

The book introduces us to some key concepts using stories from the gospels and beyond including the following:

- ” **A ministry of presence** – Based around the idea of incarnation and the I am sayings recorded in John’s gospel. The theology uses those sayings as a baseline job description for an incarnate chaplain operating as the hand of Christ in their community.
- ” **A theology of gift** – Recognising the giving by God of individuals to a place as recorded by Paul in Ephesians 4 and exemplified by Jesus in John 3:16, this theology considers the aspect of a chaplain being chosen called and given out of love and with a purpose.
- ” **A theology of hope and compassion** – Drawing on stories such as Jairus’ daughter. This theology explores the importance of the individual who matters to Jesus; it explores the willingness of Jesus to journey alongside someone in their suffering and fear. It shows how Jesus brings hope into darkness.
- ” **A theology of guest and host** – A long-held tradition within chaplaincy drawing on biblical principles of hospitality and inclusion. This theology recognises the unique position of a minister acting as guest but at times called to exercise the role of host in their context

29 Roberts, N, (2025) The Good Chaplain, Nottingham: CCCYP

” **A theology of accompanying** – The Bible clearly teaches that the Trinity is an accompanying presence whether that is the Father in Eden, Jesus on the road to Emmaus or the Holy Spirit in John’s gospel. Chaplains naturally adopt this gesture in doing their role and in doing so slip into a model ordained by God.

” **A theology of imitating Christ** – The story of the good Samaritan offers a template for chaplaincy in any context as we draw near to people, bring healing, journey with and watch over them paying whatever price is needed. At its conclusion, Jesus calls on us to go and do likewise and in so doing we imitate Christ who is the model for the Samaritan in the story. It is this theology which I think offers the most encompassing theological foundation for chaplaincy in any context but is, a particularly good fit for colleges and the students who study there.

Whichever theologies you adopt will depend on your context and this in turn will drive the models you adopt. Chaplains will vary in their emphases as they vary in their understanding of chaplaincy and that is to be expected.

What is important is that Christian chaplaincy must be biblically founded. It should reflect the person and ministry of Jesus. The theology we adopt must be integrated into the work that we do.

Questions for Reflection:

What is your theological underpinning for the work you seek to do as a chaplain?

How might your theology influence/change your practice?

How does your theology affect your view of your place in God’s mission?

Reading:

The Good Chaplain, N. Roberts, Chapters 1 and 2

A Very modern ministry, B. Ryan, Theos, 2015 pages 32–44 (see the online readers folder)

Practising the ministry of presence, N Holm (see the online readers folder)

Session 2: Models of Chaplaincy in Tertiary Education

Please also refer to the readers pack: i) the short introductory video on models and opportunities and ii) the paper on models of college chaplaincy (Four Models of Schools Work: Responsible, Purposeful Approaches for Christian Youthworkers Working in Education).

Educational Models

Tregale³⁰ introduced a useful model of chaplaincy called the prism model. She described chaplaincy as a beam of light hitting a prism and splitting into seven parts:

- ” **Pastor** – a role where the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of the students are paramount.
- ” **Teacher** – a role where the chaplain contributes to the education of the student, often specifically the Christian and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC).
- ” **Discipler** – a role where the support of Christian staff and students are of primary importance eg through prayer meetings or Christian unions.
- ” **Prophet** – a role where the chaplain is not afraid to speak truth to power, for example where they see structures or decisions being unjust with detrimental impacts on the more vulnerable in the college community.
- ” **Priest** – a role where leading worship, praying for and with the school are paramount. This is very unlikely to be the case in a college context, but is often the case in Catholic or CofE schools and colleges.
- ” **Servant** – a role where the chaplain does whatever is needed by the institution,
- ” **Missioner** – a role where the chaplain makes sharing the gospel a primary focus of their work. Whilst many colleges will not permit proselytism on campus, being ‘missional’ in the broadest sense would include a commitment to being attentive to the signs of God at work in the college, joining in with the Gospel call to love, justice and reconciliation, and being ready, when asked to ‘give reasons for the hope that is in you’ (1 Peter 3.15). We discuss this in more detail in the final module.

Tregale wasn’t suggesting that a chaplain do all of these things in every context but recognised that they might be called upon to undertake one or more of these roles in their place of work, depending upon the circumstances. It might be worthwhile considering which roles best reflect the needs of your college and how you might introduce new roles over time.

30 Tregale, D Fresh Expressions of School Chaplaincy (2010) Cambridge, Grove Books

Here is another model of four possible approaches to chaplaincy/schools work in a college or HE institution:³¹

The Servant – Jesus frequently asked people what they needed from him and he met those needs.³² What does your college need and are you and a team able to meet those needs without condition? Starting as a servant and building on those foundations leads to a unique model.

The Expert – you approach a college offering chaplaincy from a foundation of your area of expertise. For example, you may be a skilled sports person and can offer to support college in that area using that as the base of your building a ministry. There is no specific agenda other than that offered by your area of skill.

The Evangelist – not in a proselytising way, but a way of recognising that within college life there are ways in which your own spirituality can be helpful. All colleges are called on to promote SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development). As a person of faith, you can offer to bring your experience in an invitational way to tutorials. Similarly, you can offer to support college when they celebrate or recognise festivals, such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest and Remembrance. There is a chance for you to present yourself as a person with a living faith and build your ministry from that foundation.

The Accompanier – God is an accompanying God. Father Son and Holy Spirit are all characterised as those who come alongside their creation. The story of the Emmaus Road embodies this image perfectly. Recent research³³ has shown that students at college have a wide variety of deep needs but the most significant ones relate to mental health and well-being. Staff suggest that the best way of support for such students is for them to have access to someone who will journey alongside of them. Chaplains are perfectly suited to such a role and through their presence can help to bring an incarnate Jesus into a college community in a way that is most needed.

Clearly these four models have a biblical/theological foundation but also educational integrity insofar as they have clear links to curriculum and best practice in college life, They therefore offer an interesting hybrid when thinking about chaplaincy approaches in colleges.

The Locum Chaplain

A model that has been adopted across several colleges has been that of the locum chaplain.³⁴ Many colleges are uncomfortable with the concept of chaplaincy for varied reasons, and so are reluctant to engage a permanent presence at their site. However, most recognise that their students have spiritual needs and on occasions there are needs that arise which are beyond the normal experience of the pastoral and management team. On those occasions they can

31 Roberts, N. [Four Models of Schools Work](#): Responsible, Purposeful Approaches for Christians Working in Education

32 Luke 18:35ff

33 Roberts, N. [Assessing the Issues and Needs of Staff and Students](#) in Further Education in relation to the Provision of Chaplaincy/Pastoral Support services

34 Roberts, N. Exploring the Idea of Locum Chaplaincy

look outside the college community for the support they need. A locum chaplain can hence be available as required.

The reasons given for wanting the temporary services of a chaplain are fairly easy to discern – bereavement, critical incidents, help with spiritual development or student/staff stresses. The locum will be someone with experience as a chaplain and with a particular gifting in these areas. They are often clergy or youth workers, but they can be any committed member of a local Christian community.

Over time they will become familiar with staff and students and may slowly develop a stronger and more lasting relationship. Visits may be for just a short afternoon or morning or even a week. They may run a reflective space during freshers' week or in exam season. This model has some advantages... it is needs-driven and doesn't require the same level of commitment from a local church community. However, its primary disadvantage is that it is much harder to develop a ministry of incarnational presence as it is so sporadic.

In the video, Maggie Everett and the staff from Wolverhampton college talk about the role of a chaplain in terms of its contribution to college life in a range of areas that might be thought to be untypical of what we might consider to be chaplaincy.

Yet on closer examination we begin to notice something important. Chaplaincy is being seen as part of what happens in the college. It is not an add on, or a one off. It is woven into the fabric and curriculum. The chaplain is recognised and has a place. What is important here is not so much the tasks or job description but the person and their presence.

Questions for Reflection:

What is the model that most appeals to you and why? What would you consider to be the theological basis for such a model?

Looking at Tregale's idea of a Prism – which of the seven aspects do you consider to be most appropriate in the context of Further Education?

How might any model you adopt differ from a model of pastoral care generally available in the college structure?

Reading:

FE Chaplaincy Models (see the online readers folder)

The Good Chaplain, N. Roberts, Chapters 3-5

Fresh Expressions of School Chaplaincy, D. Tregale, Grove Books

Session 3: The Place of Chaplaincy in Tertiary Education

Working alongside many chaplains over the past few years I see a similar pattern. The key factor is the chaplain themselves. Their willingness to help, their clear commitment to serve. Their accessibility and compassion make the role valued because the holder of that role is valued. That is why a 'person spec' is as important as a 'job spec' when it comes to ensuring the right person. That is why no one college chaplain is like another.

Thinking theologically about what we are seeing here we might dwell for a moment in the story of Blind Bartimaeus in Luke 18:35ff. In that story Jesus hears a cry for help from the blind beggar. His response is not to go with his own agenda and impose it on him, but rather to seek to understand what it is he needs at the time. 'What would you like me to do for you?' is his opening gambit. Naturally the beggar wants to see and Jesus meets that need. Nothing more is said in the gospel account. In fact, it could be argued that in this case Jesus' actions spoke louder than words, because we read that Bartimaeus follows Jesus into Jericho. I don't think its reading too much into the text to see that as an indicator that Bartimaeus has become a disciple of Jesus.

The approach taken by Jesus in this story was not primarily evangelistic. It may not even have been particularly missional, but it was pastoral. It was an act of compassion and service prompted by love.

One of the big tensions within chaplaincy relates to motivation. We explore this more in the session on evangelism, but it's useful to raise the question here. What is the motivation for wanting to be involved in FE? If it is missional/evangelistic then it may be that there would not be a place for you in a college. Colleges are not seeking evangelists. If, however it is compassion and servant heartedness, a willingness to be like Jesus and discover how best to meet the needs of a college then chaplaincy will have a role to fulfil. That role will vary from college to college but will be the start of a journey for the chaplain on which their lives will be shared and their faith made visible through their interactions and conversations.

The chaplaincy team at Redcar college in the Northeast have been established for some time. They came into college life because of the need to find ways of supporting staff in their grief. They took tutorials on funerals amongst many other things. Have a look at their story on the YouTube video.³⁵ They now have a very clear place in the college they serve. It may not be what they had originally envisioned but it's one which they feel God has blessed.

35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYU8CLHrtY>

Questions for Reflection:

What role did you envisage playing as a chaplain in your local FE college/HE setting?

How comfortable are you with the idea that you might be involved in things that have little or no Christian content?

How might you persuade your sending body to accept that, at least initially, you may not be working in any evangelistic way?

Reading:

Faith in Further Education (see the online readers folder)

Working standards for chaplaincy with children and young people (see the online readers folder)

Module 2:

The Institution

Session 1: Management Structures, Vision and Policies

In the video Rose outlines the structure of the college and explains how a chaplaincy team might fit into that structure. She also highlights the student demographic and the range of courses available.

How did you feel as you began to get a picture of what happens within the walls of an FE college or a HE setting, if that is your context? Did you feel comfortable with the picture being presented?

Once you understand the nature of the students who go to college and the difference in structure and curriculum, you will appreciate how important it is to find a distinctive way of being a chaplain that is appropriate to your context.

FE colleges and HE settings offer an opportunity for the whole church to engage with the chaplaincy team in supporting their input. One college in Northeast England was seeking community placements for its social care students. A local church offered a placement working in its community café, toddler groups and foodbanks. Very quickly the placement became a place where students met church members doing the work of the Kingdom. Out of that experience a positive relationship grew so that when the church offered to extend their relationship with the college by having a chaplaincy team the offer was accepted.

Placements with churches can be a natural starting point for relating to a college. A church may be having building or decorating work done, or they may be seeking to develop their presence on the internet, they may be wanting to create newsletters or open a café. By approaching the college, they present a need rather than an agenda. They begin a relationship journey that may or may not end in chaplaincy, but which will bring college and church together.

One college approached a local church to ask if any of their members had work experience in a particular field of science and engineering. The church had a number of retired members who had worked in the areas mentioned and offered to support teaching in the college over a period of time. This was again a start of a journey for the church that eventually led to a chaplaincy. This was unlikely to happen in a regular school setting but the nature of the course in FE meant that it offered opportunities to the local community to engage.

In the video Rose emphasised the importance a college places on multi-faith and inclusion issues. This is an area that again is a source of tension for some. We deal with it in more detail in the video with Josh of the Feast, but it is worth considering at an early stage how as a chaplain and as a sending body you approach the issue. To the college, Christianity is just one of many faiths on offer to their students. They adopt a purely pluralistic approach. Experience has shown that chaplains unable to manage these tensions do not last long in this context.

Questions for Reflection:

What do you think is the main difference between a HE setting, FE college and a school? How will you manage that difference?

How might you involve the wider church in any chaplaincy work you undertake?

What will be your approach to working in a multi-faith context with an expectation to serve the spiritual needs of a wide range of students?

Reading:

Welcome to chaplaincy, pages 1-24 (see the online readers folder)

Love your Local FEE college (see the online readers folder)

Session 2: Teaching Skills

In his video Terry helpfully outlines the atmosphere and ethos of an FE classroom.

Is teaching within the college something that is considered part of your chaplaincy? Tregale certainly thinks it should be a consideration.³⁶

But does a college need a chaplain's input to its curriculum? I believe that it does. The requirement for colleges to provide SMSC in its classrooms³⁷ opens up opportunities for engagement with students in a wide range of topics.

Recent Open University-led research has highlighted the frequent lack of confidence around religious literacy in many FE Colleges.³⁸ There is a pressing need to improve religious literacy as part of a community cohesion agenda. It helps in cementing the British Values into a college's ethos. Teaching on Christianity in particular has been poor in both colleges and the secondary school sector,³⁹ so why not take the opportunity to offer tutorials that go some way to redressing that?

Multi-faith issues are addressed in another session but our partners at the Feast offer sessions on dialogue that fits beautifully into this subject area.

The West Midlands Churches FE Council have produced tutorial sessions for helping students get ready for life outside college. Over six sessions they cover:

- ” Cultivating Identity, Inclusion and Belonging
- ” Being Thankful
- ” Being Fair and Just
- ” Being Merciful and Forgiving
- ” Caring for Others, Animals and the Environment
- ” Being Hopeful and Visionary

You may not be able to cover all of these but there is plenty of material that has been tested and well received in colleges in their region for you to offer.⁴⁰

The Church of England have also produced some excellent material on how to live with disagreement. The difference course was initially aimed at secondary schools but has now been adapted to fit all sectors. It offers a wealth of resource materials and a clear spiritual foundation that fits well with the SMSC agenda and British Values.⁴¹

36 Tregale, D. *Fresh Expressions of School Chaplaincy* (2010) Cambridge, Grove Books

37 Department for Education, [Promoting fundamental British values](#) as part of SMSC in schools

38 <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/a-social-justice-approach>

39 Ofsted, [Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report](#)

40 <https://wmcfec.org.uk/rounded-ready-for-life/>

41 <https://difference.rln.global>

There will be other topics too that you may be prepared to offer if you feel you have adequate training or experience. For example, some chaplains offer sessions on grief and death, others on Fair Trade. Christians Against Poverty⁴² produce great material that one chaplain regularly uses with new students at a college as part of their induction. Discover what you know in your team and then ask whether what you have is of any value to the college.

Teaching can be daunting. Who is responsible for discipline? How do I engage the quieter students? What if I don't have answers to the questions being asked? Perhaps you might consider doing some additional training. Your college may be able to help in this. One college in the West Midlands offers an in-house FE training to visitors which is recognised as a good baseline qualification. Alternatively, you could ask to sit in on sessions to see how the professionals manage a classroom.

It is not an area of chaplaincy that everyone will engage with, but it does offer an excellent opportunity to start to engage with students on a deeper level and may lead to conversations outside the classroom. Jesus was a teacher and we can take inspiration from the fact that a great deal of his ministry on earth combined the pastoral and the educational. It's a good example to follow if we have the opportunity.

Informal Education

The likelihood is that rather than being engaged in the more formal side of teaching in a college, you are more likely to become involved in informal education, at least initially. Informal education is not tied to a curriculum or a classroom. It is education that is delivered through conversation and is quite often open ended with no learning objectives or agendas. We often are engaged in it without being aware of the fact. Martin Buber talks about informal educators being teachers inside and outside the classroom, on duty and off duty. He sees the conversations we hold with others as a holy space in which it is possible for God to be revealed through the words and lifestyles of those taking part. So, a chaplain who engages in a conversation in a corridor or in the chaplains office, in the refectory or at the bus stop may well be facilitating important learning as well as offering pastoral support.

A more intentional form of education occurs through enrichment activities offered to students during breaks. These are simple activities which can be linked to the events calendar focussing on Christmas, New Year, end of term, religious festivals and so on. One example from a college in the Midlands was that during lunch break, students were invited to select a gingerbread man and decorate it in such a way as to show the kind of student they would like to be in the coming year. Whilst students engaged in the decoration, the chaplain was able to talk about what they were doing, exploring character, hopes and dreams and so on. Similarly exercises around Chinese new year allow students to talk about their hopes and fears about the future. What these activities illustrate is that with careful thought and preparation life lessons can be taught in non-threatening and fun ways.

42 <https://capuk.org/money-and-debt-advice/practical-resources>

Conversations can be started which form the basis for future relationships.

Jesus was a great informal educator. His formal teaching, such as the sermon on the mount, will have had a massive impact on the disciples. But how much more of an impact came from the conversations he had informally around prayer or about who is the greatest.

It will be good to consider ways in which you can ensure informal education forms a major part of your role as chaplain.

Questions for Reflection:

How do I honestly feel about teaching as part of my chaplaincy? What are the misgivings that I can identify?

If I was to teach, what would be the subjects in which I have confidence?

How might I ensure informal education becomes a natural part of my role as chaplain?

Reading:

Encountering the Christian Story, pages 24–34 (see the online readers folder)

Session 3: Engaging with College Culture

In our introductory videos we have seen that colleges have a great commitment to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI). However, when it comes to religion and belief as a protected characteristic, colleges (and many other sectors) can be less confident in knowing how to manage issues surrounding it. It is in these areas that an understanding and empathetic chaplain, who shares the college understanding of the importance of DEI, can be of value.

An FE chaplain must operate within this commitment and there will be issues which arise that need to be navigated sensitively and with wisdom. These will include issues of sexuality, faith, ability and gender.

Josh in his video introduces us to the idea of dialogue as a means of building relationship between people of different faiths. We have already seen from the video talk by Rose how important it is for a chaplain to understand and engage with the multi-faith context.

There are several approaches to multi-faith working which may be worth reviewing and which may resonate with your own theological and philosophical position.

There is the approach known as **friendship and exchange** and articulated by Celia Blackden in her excellent grove book.⁴³ This idea moves on from multi-faith working being based on core values, mutual respect, honest dialogue and religious literacy to a more radical concept of creating relationships of depth, friendships, which allow for the honest exchange of beliefs and views without the need for proselytism.

Friendship is defined in terms of dialogue, laughter, dissent, love and the seeking of good for others. Exchange recognises the value of difference as opposed to aiming at inclusion or integration. Such relationships are only possible when we as chaplains practice radical hospitality and are prepared to engage in radical openness. Paul Hodges states that we must respect the particularity of religion in at least two ways; on the one hand to recognise that very different things are being said by each of us and on the other to recognise that we need to stand within a particular tradition if we are to talk from anywhere meaningful to others.⁴⁴

Hospitality is a biblical tradition and indeed a biblical mandate. We see in many parts of the Bible that it is in the practising of hospitality that God is made known (for example, Genesis 18.1-19). How can we ensure that such an atmosphere is present in our chaplaincy? Part of the answer will be linked to our guiding theology, part in our character.

43 Blackden, C. (2010). *Friendship and exchange with people of other beliefs*, Cambridge: Grove Books

44 Hodges, P. (2021). *Understanding Religion*, California, UC press.

Nouwen⁴⁵ in reaching out says: 'it is obligatory for Christians to offer an open, hospitable space where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become our fellow human beings.' Most importantly he sees hospitality as a means of neutering aggression, disarming tension and conflict. 'When hostility is converted into hospitality then fearful strangers become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them'. His idea in this is that every encounter with a stranger or someone of a different faith offers God the opportunity to bring the blessing into the encounter such as when we recognize that the people we welcome into our teams have something that would be a revelation to us of God.

Matters of difference also arise in relation to other areas; for example, gender, sexuality and identity have become significant. Can we apply the same principles of friendship and exchange of dialogue to this topic, particularly where the college and a church or faith organisation have a different starting point? In chapter 9 of the Good Chaplain, the approach of 'L shaped theology' is presented, so that:

We learn to listen – to the whole story of those we seek to serve – drawing on the example of Jesus in the gospels we seek understanding first.

We commit to love – not the easy cliché of 'love the sinner hate the sin,' but love that adopts a posture of embrace as with the father in the prodigal. The importance of posture and gesture are crucial to ensuring a loving response that is authentic.

We commit to look – with the eyes of Jesus at those we serve. Samuel was corrected by God for looking on people's outside and urged to look, like God, on the heart.⁴⁶

Whatever approach you adopt, the question of DEI will be central and as chaplain you will need to display an understanding of and commitment to its principles and application. This is the world of FE and HE, as it is the world of our society.

45 Nouwen, H. (2013). Reaching Out, p.65.

46 1 Sam 16:7

Questions for Reflection:

How easy will you find it to befriend people of other faiths, of a sexual orientation different to your own, or some other form of identity which you do not share?

How can you ensure that your chaplaincy is truly hospitable?

What more do you feel you need to know about DEI (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion)?

Reading

Faiths and FE (see the online readers folder)

Friendship and exchange, C. Blackden, Grove Books

The Feast Website

The Feast



Living Well with Difference

The Feast is a youth work project with a desire to bring teenagers together from different faiths and cultures to build friendships, explore faith and change lives. We acknowledge the differences between our faiths and cultures, and know that these differences will inevitably lead to disagreements. However, we teach our young people to have positive dialogue, learning from each other and learning about themselves in the process.

Dialogue

vs

Debate

Creates an uneven playing field
— louder, quicker, or more
confident voices dominate.

Purpose is to win or
prove a point.

Amplifies existing power
differences (e.g. age,
position, personality).

Tries to change the
other person's beliefs.

Can make people feel
judged, defensive or
reduced to a stereotype.

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Everyone has equal
opportunity to share.

Purpose is to listen,
understand and
build connection.

Actively balances power..

Creates space to share belief
without pressure to agree.

Makes people feel seen as whole
individuals, without the pressure
of being spokespeople for their
faith or culture.

The importance and power of dialogue is highlighted beautifully in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (read John 4:1-26). Jesus immediately levels the playing field, highlighting his vulnerability and humility ("Will you give me a drink?"). He breaks down barriers and builds bridges between two cultures that should never normally associate with each other. The conversation is marked by curiosity, honesty, respect and revelation, ultimately leading to transformation for the woman. Neither person 'wins', and Jesus responds to the woman's questions with patience.



How can you reveal Jesus to people in your setting through dialogue?
Can dialogue have an equally transformative impact in your setting? Why/why not?

One of the key messages from the video produced by Katy and her colleagues was how much effort colleges put into caring for students. So that when a chaplain comes into a college setting, they can be sure that they are joining with an existing team that share their concerns and many of their values.

In the recent research into student needs,⁴⁷ one of the suggestions was for chaplains to be people who supported students on their journey and helped build their resilience. But what do we mean by student resilience? We don't mean teaching them to avoid stress. It's more about how to manage it. A student can be described as being resilient when, faced with stress, they are able to adapt and recover from the situations they have faced.

Student resilience can be said to have certain key building blocks:

Emotional intelligence and the ability to control emotional responses: Many of us suffer from emotional immaturity. We haven't yet been able to process rejection or not getting our own way. We react in childlike ways which create additional stresses in our own lives and the lives of others. As a chaplain what can you do to model a positive emotional life?

Good self-esteem: Research has shown that good self-esteem is often related to the difference between a person's ideal self and their self-image.⁴⁸ If there is a great gap between the person they want to be and the person they see themselves as, then their esteem will be low. If there is little or no gap, then their esteem will be high. Self-image is often created by negative comments from others. How can we as chaplains ensure we are building positive images into the lives of those we serve, not only through our own words but through a revelation of how that student is seen by God.

Wide coping boundaries: Everyone needs wide boundaries in their lives. By that we mean space into which we can retreat if necessary. A boundary is defined as the gap between our load (workload, life experiences etc) and our capability. If our load is equal to our capability, then there will be no gap at all and no place to retreat. All that is left is collapse and breakdown. As a chaplain how can we help students build in space to their lives? How can we help in reducing staff and student workload (identified by the government in its recent well-being charter as the main cause of ill being in schools)?⁴⁹

Good self-knowledge: How well do we know ourselves? Do we know what triggers our emotions and fears. Once we are in a position to identify those things then we will be better able to manage our lives to reduce exposure to them. How can a chaplain help in this area? In the Christian life this is where our relationship with God really matters. He knows us better than we know ourselves and our prayer lives help us hear from God as he reveals to us those things that may do us harm.

Chaplains are not usually experts in this field. We recommend training as a specialist mental health first aider and if possible pursuing qualifications in

47 Roberts, N, [Assessing the Issues and Needs of Staff and Students in Further Education](#) in relation to the Provision of Chaplaincy/Pastoral Support services

48 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301662815_Self-Esteem

49 Department for Education (2021). [Department for Education \(2021\)](#).

appropriate counselling or other disciplines.

The mental health first aid action plan offers a general guideline when approaching issues of mental health with young people, using the acronym ALGEE

A – approach the young person, assess and assist in any crisis

L-listen and communicate non judgmentally

G – give support and information

E – encourage the young person to get appropriate professional help

E – encourage other supports

This guidance is part of the mental health first aid training and many colleges are seeking to ensure their staff obtain this qualification in order to be more effective in their roles, whatever that may be – learning support, admin, pastoral care or teaching.

Theologically we can look to Jesus who lived the life of balance. In Luke 2:52 we read that Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and favour with God and man. That showed us a balance to life that can support well-being:

Wisdom – growing in knowledge and understanding, studying well at college, but not to the exclusion of everything else.

Stature – Jesus lived a healthy life and grew well. He walked, had breaks, ate well etc. Students need to know about healthy lifestyles.

Grew in favour with God – prayer and relationship with the father were key to Jesus. Can you as a chaplain offer opportunities, maybe through prayer spaces, for students to explore the big existential questions?

Grew in favour with man – Jesus had a social life! He spent time with friends, eating, walking, sailing. He valued the support of close friends.

The model presented by Jesus here is a great one to use as a point of reference in your work and may prove helpful in supporting student resilience. We will look at this model in relation to the wellbeing of a chaplain in a later section.

Questions for Reflection:

How well do you consider yourself to be? Are you living a Jesus model of well-being?

What are the gaps in your training that need to be filled to be more effective in this area?

What can you practically do in a college to support staff and students in improving their well-being?

Reading:

Assessing the issues facing staff and students (see the online readers folder)

A nexus of eyes (see the online readers folder)

Module 3:

The Student

Session 1: Listening and Pastoral Skills

The two videos on conversation skills and listening are very helpful reminders of some of the skills we need to adopt to communicate well with students and staff.

When asked what they most valued when interacting with adults, 'being listened to' is one of the most common student responses. The reason is fairly straightforward: being listened to and being attended to affirms that you exist; that you matter.

We have already seen in our reflections on theology that Jesus was a great listener. He listened to Jairus,⁵⁰ He listened to the disciples on the Emmaus Road,⁵¹ He listened to the woman who had suffered from bleeding.⁵²

Another way of putting this is that He gave people his full attention. The woman with the bleeding problem is described in the gospels as being at a point where she realises that she can't escape Jesus' attention. The disciples at the beautiful gate have no money for the beggar,⁵³ but what they have is time. They give him their full attention. It says in Acts that they looked him in the eyes.

The gift of attention, which is the foundation for the gift of listening is a vital tool for the chaplain.

In reflecting on this we must always bear in mind that as we listen, as we build trust with students and staff, we may also hear things that disturb us and may need to be passed on. In all our conversations we need to be mindful of issues of safeguarding and as all chaplains will have received training in this area from the college, so should know the process and procedures we must follow. The question of confidentiality in conversations is important to understand and make clear to those we are listening to. If in any doubt talk to the designated safeguarding lead.

A question for you to consider is do you have time to listen? Often when we have been a chaplain for a long time, we discover that our days have become filled with routine duties. Things we must do, reports we must write, tutorials we must

50 Mark 5:22

51 Luke 24:13

52 Mark 5:33

53 Acts 3:5ff

prepare, so much so that when we are interrupted, we are not able to give that time and attention we need to because of the demands on our time that have built up. This links back to some of our thoughts in the last module. How big are your boundaries? Are you interruptible? Is your workload so great that you are at capacity?

Being available and accessible is essential for the effective chaplain. If you are working from a theology of 'you matter' then the one person is always your priority.

You will be unable to work from your foundation if there is no space for conversation. Is listening your priority?

Questions for Reflection:

How interruptible are you?

Honestly reflect on how good a listener you are. Is there something you can do to improve your skills?

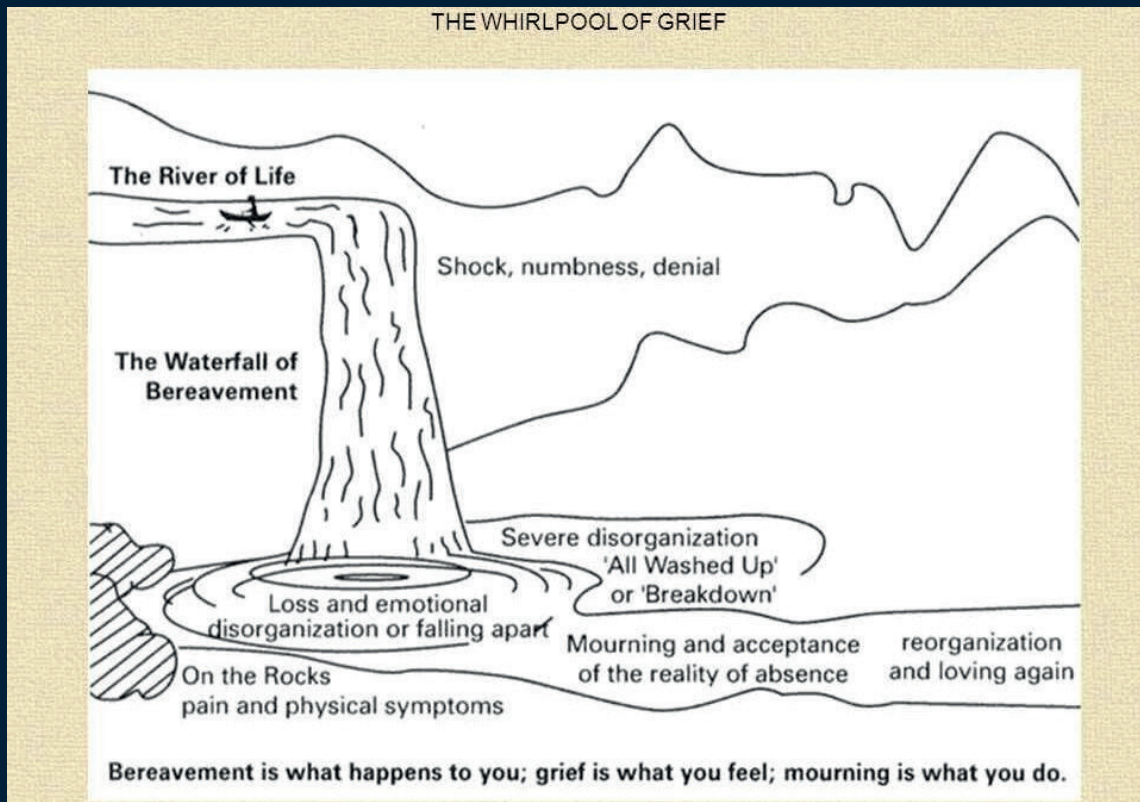
Reacquaint yourself with your college safeguarding policy – how can you broach the topic of confidentiality with sensitivity when in conversation with a student or staff member?

Reading:

Welcome to chaplaincy, pages 97-126 (see the online readers folder)

Active listening (see the online readers folder)

Session 2: Supporting Through Bereavement



In his video on grief Paul talks about how important it is for chaplains to be

presence. This is what I believe is our primary purpose.

Academics often talk about stages of grief, and the diagram below offers a look at three different ideas. Take a look and assess which resonates most with you:

In hospital chaplaincy the chaplain is often referred to as the companion on the pathway through grief, offering practical and spiritual support with matters such as end of life ritual, funerals, support into the future and anniversaries and remembrance. Everything a chaplain does is for the sake of the family. SAKE is an acronym used in paediatric chaplaincy to talk about:⁵⁶

- ” Skills
- ” Attitudes
- ” Knowledge
- ” Ethics

Take a moment to reflect on:

- ” What you feel might be your areas of strength and weakness here.
- ” What new skills do you need
- ” What do you already have?
- ” What more do you need to know?
- ” What is your attitude?
- ” Is your behaviour appropriate and ethical?

Looking at the four elements of ‘SAKE’ on the following pages...

What skills might you need? Put a tick against the elements you are comfortable with and a cross against those where you feel you need extra input. Review this activity at the end of the course and seek further help. The bereavement course (<https://www.thebereavementjourney.org>) might be a great place to start.

56 Nash, P. (2011). *Supporting dying children and their families*, SPCK, p.41

Skills

- Being present and available
- Encouraging active listening
- Help makes sense of bad news if it is at all possible
- Bring appropriate hope
- Help a child die wll (help a family say goodbye)
- Facilitate ritual
- Facilitate forgiveness
- Keep the name alive and honour the family
- Be both proactive and reactive
- Work within boundaries

What attitudes might you present? Put a tick against the elements you are comfortable with and a cross against those where you feel you need extra input. Review this activity at the end of the course and seek further help.

Attitudes

Desire

Desire to build genuine relationships

Don't
feel

Don't feel you have all the answers

Be

Be comfortable around death

Don't
take

Don't take control unless it is given to you

Be

Be non judgemental

What Knowledge is essential? Put a tick against the elements you are comfortable with and a cross against those where you feel you need extra input. Review this activity at the end of the course and seek further help.

Knowledge	Be	Be self aware
	Know	Know what care to offer and when
	Get	Get to understand the family and family dynamic

What should be your ethics?



Questions for Reflection:

How do I feel about offering support in this area?

What practical help might I offer in a college in terms of personal and corporate support?

Who might I ask for help in dealing with this?

Reading:

The trauma informed school (see the online readers folder)

Supporting through grief (see the online readers folder)

Caring for Sick and Dying children, P. Nash, SPCK

Session 3: Supporting Through Conflict

In the video Jo talks about various strategies to deal with conflict between young people that might arise in classrooms or clubs in college and outside. The key message is about keeping yourself and the students safe.

But conflict isn't just likely between students or even between students and staff. It can arise between staff themselves. Over the past few years, the Church of England has developed a course called 'Difference' which is intended to help people learn to disagree well. A post-16 version of the course is also available, and this also works well with adult groups too: Nigel found it a great way of working with staff and used it in CPD to ensure that the staff community could continue to exist amicably. A link to the materials is found below²⁹ but the course outline can be summarised as follows:

Developing positive habits – Recognising that 45% of our actions each day arise from habit, the course aims to encourage the development of positive habits that affect thoughts, actions and character. The three key habits to acquire are labelled:

Be curious – To be curious about people, is a foundation for understanding and understanding is a key to reducing potential conflict. Being curious involves beginning to truly listen to others, to see the world through their eyes, affirming the value of those you are with, cultivating humility and moving from presumption to understanding. These are all characteristics found in Jesus and reflect much of our theology from session 1.

Be present – To be present to people means we seek to make all our encounters authentic and when we are with people we try to communicate to them the fact that they are the most important person to you at that moment. We need to be attentive and meet people where they are. Again, all of this is beautifully modelled in Jesus and we can discover more of how Jesus made this real by reading through the good chaplain.

Re imagine – When considering relationships where conflict is happening or likely, begin to think of ways to change that might build hope and trust in that relationship. Dare to dream and share those dreams. Move from hopelessness to creativity to renewal.

²⁹ <https://difference.rln.global>

Questions for Reflection:

What triggers you? How might you work towards reducing conflict in your own life?

What might you offer to colleges as a chaplain by way of supporting staff and students in this area?

What do you see in how Jesus managed conflict that might inform your practice?

Reading:

The Good Chaplain, N. Roberts, Chapter 9

The Difference Course

Module 4:

The sending Body, the Chaplain and the Work

Session 1: Motivations

For churches and aspiring chaplains looking to engage with the Further Education sector, it's really important to be clear about our motivations – clear to ourselves, but also transparent to others, so that there are no 'hidden agendas'.

It's also really important to ask ourselves how our motivation, our theology and our model of chaplaincy relate to each other. Without care, we can end up in a situation where our motivation shapes our chaplaincy model, which in turn shapes our theology of chaplaincy. As suggested in Session 1, this is the wrong way around. It's far better that our theology shapes our model of chaplaincy, and our motivation is then channeled and shaped by these two things.

Most chaplaincy provision is driven first and foremost by a desire to show unconditional love and care to others; the kind of love and care that Jesus had in mind when he said that besides loving God, the second 'greatest commandment' is to love our neighbour as ourselves. We love others because God first loved us, and because we want to share in Jesus' calling when he says 'I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10.10). We want to offer chaplaincy because when we show compassion and care to others, it supports them in living life to the full. It's central to the vision of the Kingdom of God (life lived according to God's priorities) which Jesus taught about.

Within this, one of the things that makes chaplaincy distinctive from any other caring or supporting role is that people of faith believe that our spiritual flourishing is a vital element of living life to the full. As Christians, we might think of Jesus' teaching that 'man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4.4).

Every faith and belief understands this in different ways, whilst agreeing on the basic importance of spiritual flourishing as part of what makes us 'whole people'. Even many atheists and humanists will agree on the importance of spiritual flourishing, although will understand something different by 'spiritual'. We never force that spiritual exploration on anyone, but it is a key part of our theological model and motivation as chaplains that we want to provide opportunities for people to undertake spiritual exploration.

This raises the particular question of evangelism, and whether preaching the Gospel can be a legitimate motivation for chaplaincy. Over the years, many churches and individuals have become interested in chaplaincy (in a variety of different sectors) because they want to see others come to faith in Jesus. It's worth saying clearly that many colleges will not regard evangelism as an appropriate activity on campus: colleges have an educational mission, not an evangelistic one. They may also be concerned that allowing one group to proselytise will open the floodgates to all sorts of other groups looking to do the same. In some cases, nervousness about proselytism can result from a

misunderstanding of what religious groups are trying to do and how they are going to do it. But it's also important to note that there have been several cases over the years where groups looking to evangelize have caused significant damage within a college community – and damage to the reputation of Christian churches more generally.

So does that mean sharing faith is completely off-limits in a Further or Higher Education context? No – it remains possible in all sorts of ways to provide opportunities for students and staff to explore big questions of faith, provided this is done in an invitational, non-coercive environment where people feel safe to participate on their own terms, and free to agree or disagree as they see fit. Key to this is understanding how to do this in the right way, and what sorts of people we are as chaplains in the midst of it.

The key here is to look back to the New Testament and follow the model of Jesus. Jesus loves and cares for people; he invites, discusses, and asks plenty of questions (in fact, asking open questions seems to be one of Jesus' primary methods of engaging the crowds he spoke with). Occasionally he challenges his hearers, but he never coerces and manipulates.

As Christians, we understand that just as Jesus was sent into the world, so we are also sent by Jesus. In John 21 Jesus says: 'as the Father sent me, so I send you'. How did the Father send Jesus? First, out of love. John 3.16 makes it clear that God so loved the world that he sent his son. Our work is motivated by love. Love of God and love of the community to which we are sent. Second, Jesus was sent by his father 'to dwell amongst us' – he was made 'incarnate'; in other words, he became fully human and (as Eugene Peterson puts it in *The Message*), he 'moved into the neighbourhood'. Our mission must also be incarnational. We become part of the place to which we are sent. You can read more about this in chapter 6 of *The Good Chaplain*.

In practice, many colleges are willing to permit spaces for faith exploration and faith sharing, but these are:

- ” Always with the agreement of the college and within college safeguarding and Prevent policies
- ” Often arrived at after many years of building up a relationship of trust with the chaplain
- ” Clear about what the purpose is, with no hidden agendas
- ” Student-led (in the sense that students opt in to the activity rather than being compelled to join. It can also be great if students want to lead or co-lead a faith discussion too!)
- ” Non-coercive (i.e., people always have free choices and there is no pressure to believe or agree with a certain position)
- ” Spaces where participants can feel comfortable to share their views and to disagree, in an atmosphere of mutual respect

If your local college does not permit any form of evangelistic activity (such as a Christian enquirer's course or a visiting Christian band) it is vital to accept this. However, there are still many ways in which you can serve your college pastorally and compassionately, and provide opportunities for students (and staff) to explore their spiritual side and to mark or learn more about religious faith(s). In the video, Sixth Form College chaplain Richard Pidgley offers some helpful thoughts about how serving and sharing go together. Sections 2 and 3 of this module also give some further guidance on two ways of supporting others to explore faith – prayer spaces and acts of remembrance/worship.

Starting to think about Chaplaincy as a Church

These questions we have begun to explore should be discussed in any church by those experiencing the call to chaplaincy with the church members and leaders. The church needs to own fully the vision to become involved with their local college. They need to be committed to the theology and model being proposed and they need to be prepared to offer the support necessary. This support may take the form of funding, prayer, regular input to church meetings, pastoral supervision. Many churches are very used to supporting missionaries and if they can see that chaplaincy is an expression of their mission then the support structures can be put into place quickly. They are essential. Chaplaincy is a role that can carry a lot of stress. A chaplain is often burdened with the problems of others. They need to be sure that they are not being left alone. Research by the Church of England's Growing Faith foundation has shown that a sense of abandonment among chaplains is common.¹ Essential support structures must be in place before the work begins.

Approaching your Local College

In the readers folder (How can Chaplaincy enhance a college community?) we include a possible document that a church can use when first approaching a college. It lists a number of ways in which the chaplain can support a college.

When approaching a college, it is possible to arrange a meeting with the Principal or Vice-Principal, but if that is not possible the Head of Student Services (or 'Learner Services') is often very helpful and keen to engage with those in the community who can help. The research document in the accompanying document pack will inform you of some of the needs of colleges students and staff. Think about how you might tailor your offer to seek to meet some of those needs.

In a previous role, Nigel (handbook author) used to vet applications from churches to become involved in a school at which he was working as chaplain. He would sit with the principal and listen to what prospective chaplains had to say. As a general rule of thumb, if the conversation started with 'we would like to be able to...' Nigel would tend to be wary of their motivations. Whereas if they started with 'we have been researching your school and see that you have needs in... we think we might be able to help here' they would be more likely to be welcomed.

Research colleges generally, your local college specifically; you may have people who work there in your congregation, and then honestly assess how best you can work to meet their needs as a Christian visitor.

Questions for Reflection:

Reflect upon what your motivation is for chaplaincy in this college.

How can you research the needs of your local college? Reflect on how you can be sensitive to the context and have integrity.

What practical things can you do to develop and enhance your pastoral skills?

Session 2: Prayer Spaces and Spiritual Care

It must be acknowledged that as a chaplain in an FE college or HE setting you should have access to a prayer room or reflective space. There will be such a venue on all the college campuses. How well used this, will differ from location to location. Some colleges will not have a dedicated prayer space at all, or perhaps only offer use of a classroom on a limited basis. If a prayer room exists it is most likely to be a single room for use of different faiths, rather than a dedicated Christian or Muslim space, for example. Such, specific religious symbols or imagery are unlikely to be permanently situated. Many college prayer rooms, particularly in urban areas, are most heavily used by Muslim students.

Sometimes, colleges keep prayer rooms locked – sometimes this is out of safeguarding concerns for isolated individuals who might be using the room; in other cases it may be because use of the room has been abused in the past. It may be difficult to keep the place staffed unless it also doubles as a chaplaincy office. Many chaplains use their prayer room as an information point. Copies of holy books are available. There may be a prayer request post box. Some artefacts may be kept there so that anyone wanting to make use of them for a quiet moment of reflection may do so.

Due to the pressure of space such rooms are often commandeered by other staff for one to ones or isolation. Their original object is difficult to maintain. That's why pop-up spaces have become more usual.

In the video we outline a number of occasions when pop up spaces might be welcomed. But what about a more permanent reflective space that can be accessed at all times?

One of the more innovative approaches I know of was taken by the team in Wolverhampton where they curtained off a section of the student support hub, furnished it with pin boards, tables and comfortable chairs and had a number of reflective exercises available each week that students could engage with. These were refreshed regularly and the space proved to be a popular and helpful resource for both staff and students. It became a calm centre. Holy ground. In my visits I was always amazed at the change in atmosphere as you walked across a busy room, and entered in.

Another option that I have used is to create reflective corners in classrooms. These are basically just a table with a few words, pictures and exercises on them and a couple of chairs. Students could access them if necessary, during a session or more often at the end of a tutorial. Often it would be used for just a few seconds, to breathe, or sometimes for longer. They became a safe space in a room. Holy ground.

I have used the phrase Holy Ground a couple of times in this chapter with deliberate reason. As a chaplain with a ministry of presence, we are seeking to offer students a chance to encounter 'the other.' Often that will be in conversation

with ourselves, but sometimes it might be through an activity or a place. By creating such places around the college, we are opening doors to wonder and affirm to all that there is more to life than just the classroom.

Finally, you might consider an online prayer space. As part of the college website why not have a chaplaincy section with prayers, pictures, interactive elements, videos, thoughts for the day etc. Not all students want to be seen entering a reflective space but still want to connect with the spiritual. Offering a digital room may be a perfect answer to the needs of some. Where I have seen this work well I have seen how the digital room provides a foundation for conversation later in the week, it can be the start of a relationship or healing. It can be Holy Ground.

Questions for Reflection:

How might you create Holy Ground in your college?

What might be the obstacles you might encounter here and how might you overcome them?

What is the difference between a prayer space and a reflective space?

Reading:

Roberts, N. The Good Chaplain, Chapters 6 and 7

Faith in Further Education, Chapter 2 (see the online readers folder)

Session 3: Leading Acts of Worship, Celebration, Commemoration or Remembrance

Leading an act of worship in a college is a very different task to leading in a church.

Firstly, can it ever truly be an act of worship when maybe as many as 95% of those present have no concept of God or faith of any kind? It might be useful to reframe thinking of these acts in terms of collective remembrance and celebration. That said, as a chaplain in these spaces you yourself are offering worship in some way, through your words, your actions and your presence.

Secondly, is it possible to conduct an act of worship or collective remembrance that involves people of all faiths and none?

How are you able to conduct such an act with any sense of integrity as a Christian chaplain?

It could be argued that it is not so very different to leading an act of collective worship in a school. That gives us an important clue into how we, as chaplains, approach such matters. It is collective, not corporate worship. It is offered by the chaplain, on behalf of those in the college. Making that our starting point is really helpful in moving forward.

What constitutes worship? In many ways it is a movement occasioned by love that pulls the worshipper closer to God. Is that possible in a college setting?

It may be possible to offer an act of service in which God's presence is acknowledged, his interest in those gathered recognised, and the need for everyone present to play a part in His world.

In this instance opportunities to inspire a sense of awe and wonder become important. Steve Younger writing about worship in Scottish schools and colleges talks about the need to engage senses.³⁰ He lists eight:

- ” Sensing mystery
- ” Sensing values
- ” Sensing meaningfulness
- ” Sensing a changed quality of awareness

30 Younger, S, (2018). Time for Reflection, Edinburgh, St Andrews Press

- ” Sensing otherness
- ” Sensing challenge
- ” Sensing stillness
- ” Sensing community

His approach to acts of worship is really helpful in that it can have relevance to all ages and all faiths and none. His premise is that anything we do needs to include activities – words, songs, music, film that challenge us at a spiritual level through engaging us sensually. So, images from nature may inspire a sense of awe at creation and prompt questions about whether there is a creator. Images of suffering may engage our sense of fairness and justice and prompt questions of how we can respond as individuals and as a college. They may also prompt us to ask questions about what matters to us and what are the values we hold onto.

Younger’s approach allows us to take an event, such as Remembrance Day and fill it with content that is a signpost to something deeper, without proselytising and without promoting one faith over another. It is deeply respectful of those in attendance and unashamedly challenging. It may not be worship but it could be the basis of a service. This approach also allows for involvement from the college body – so that people who profess a different faith or have no faith can contribute without a loss of integrity.

Christian worship that is recognisable as such becomes more possible at Christmas and Easter where hymns songs and readings can tell a story and share theology openly through long established and recognised words.

This is a very sensitive area for a chaplain, and a great deal of trust is involved on behalf of the institution. It may be years before a chaplain is given permission to engage the college community in this way, but it is an opportunity to be sought and treasured when it comes.

Questions for Reflection:

What do I think of when I use the word worship?

How might I involve others of all faiths or none in any activities I lead?

What would be my aim in asking to hold a service in the college?

Reading:

Welcome to Chaplaincy, Module 9 (see the online readers folder)

Encountering the Christian Story, pages 11-19 (see the online readers folder)

<https://prayerspacesinschools.org/events/event/the-prayer-spaces-sessions-19-further-education/>

Session 4: Self Care

Jesus looked after himself in a wonderfully holistic way and in Luke 2 v 52 we read that he grew in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and with man. An echo of a similar verse describing the upbringing of the young Samuel.³¹ We touched briefly on this in an earlier section but need to take more time to reflect on this now.

This four-part approach can be boiled down to:

- ” Jesus studied and trained (growing in wisdom)
- ” Lived well and healthily (growing in stature)
- ” Developed his spiritual life (growing in favour with God)
- ” Developed a healthy social life (growing in favour with man)

Let's spend some time reflecting on each of those areas

Growing in Wisdom

I have been engaged in youthwork and chaplaincy support for around forty years. It would have been very easy for me to reach a point where I thought that I had learned all I needed to know. I could have neglected opportunities for CPD and training that were offered to me. I could have turned aside from reading yet another book on chaplaincy (like this one).

Yet such an approach would have been both arrogant and dangerous. In recent years I have learned so much from studies of trauma informed work, diversity issues, spiritual care, and from being part of various networks. I have benefitted from the wisdom and practice of others. I have intentionally prioritised these times. Rather than seeing them as an intrusion into the real work of my day I have seen them as the work of the day. Being a chaplain, means I must continue to seek to grow in wisdom.

How many times have you been too busy to attend a network session or read a book. If you can think of such times reflect on what you might have missed that could have helped in your growth as a chaplain.

Living Well

Jesus got plenty of exercise, that's for sure. I can't imagine how many steps he walked each day, but that model has been an inspiration for me to keep as fit as I can be for my age. I haven't joined a gym (though for some that might be the best answer) instead I have chosen to walk 10,000 steps a day. At first, I thought that there would be no way I could achieve that in the middle of a busy life, but it has proved remarkably easy because I prioritised it. So instead of watching a tv

31 1 Samuel 2:26

show in the evening I would have a walk with my wife or on my own. Those walks have also been the time to relax; to think and to be inspired and now I cannot imagine my days without them.

Alongside my fitness push I have looked seriously at my diet and made some major changes to what I eat. Some of this has been prompted by doctors saying I need to reduce this or that, but whatever the reason, we now eat a very healthy diet and enjoy its benefits. Yes, there are days when I crave a pizza or a burger and give into that temptation, but overall, I have found the difference to my energy levels and general well-being has been amazing.

But it's not just our physical fitness we need to keep an eye on. I have struggled for many years with anxiety which can be very debilitating. There are so many things that trigger this, so I have had to have support to help me navigate life's challenges. I have also had to learn not to take on too much.

Well-being is now a massive issue across society. In my school we discuss it daily. The governors have reports on staff and pupil well-being at every meeting. Strategies are in place to help with things such as workload, relationships and stress.

As a pastoral carer you will often come across people whose well-being is suffering and will be expected to offer help. How can you do this if you yourself don't take care? It's a vital part of our holistic self-care.

Loving God

When was the last time you had a retreat? I used to have retreats regularly throughout my ministry but then in these latter years they seemed to have dropped off and I found that I was missing them. A few days before writing this chapter I did a pilgrimage and walked round the wells of Derbyshire villages and prayed, listened and enjoyed the time alone with God. It was a wonderful pause, and I couldn't believe that I had neglected this part of my life for so long.

The word retreat carries with it various implications:

Each year I paint my fences so that they will be better able to withstand the bad weather; the wind and the rain they will invariably have to face in the winter months. I treat or more accurately retreat the fences. How much more do we need to retreat our spirits, to ensure we can face what storms life may throw at us?

When I visit my grandchildren, they expect that I will bring them a treat of some kind. Anything from a chocolate bar to a book or a game. When I do treat them it's a blessing. When I first became a Christian I received so many blessings, so many gifts from God, how much more do I need to be retreated by him now, to receive again those gifts he bestowed through his Holy Spirit.

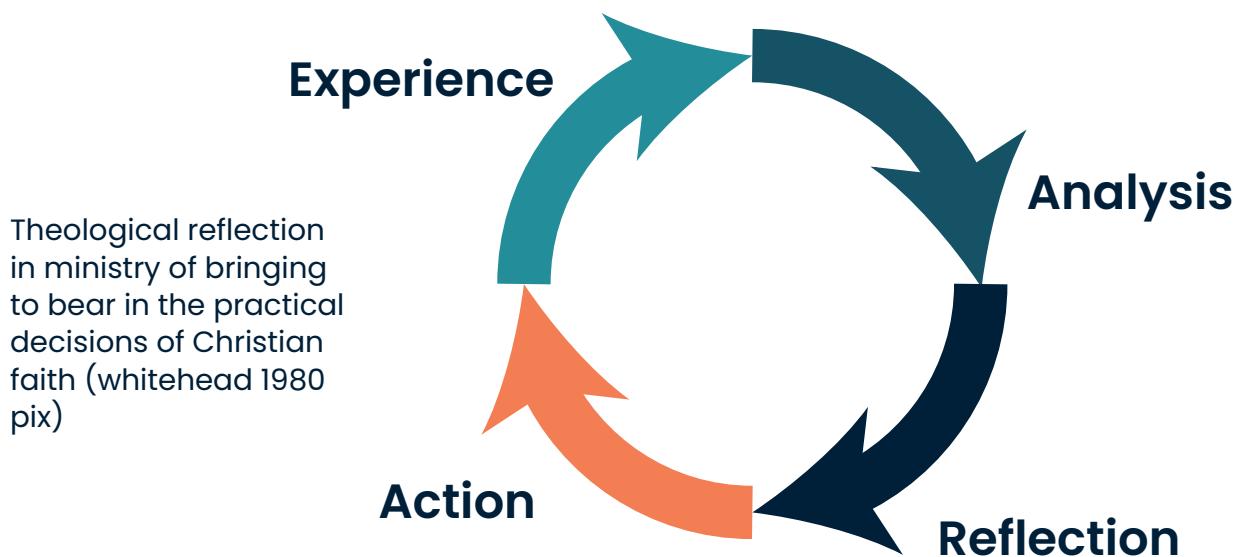
Retreat means withdrawing from a place in order to, at some point in the future, move forward once more. It's a time to recoup strength, to heal wounds suffered in battle, to rethink strategy. How much do we need to do this in our ministry? How often have you been wounded by the words of those we serve or how often have circumstances led to heartache or suffering?

All these thoughts are to show how important it is that as a chaplain you prioritise retreat. You prioritise your relationship with God, your vocation, your own faith. We neglect them at our peril and Jesus himself shows us on many occasions how he took himself away.³² The time in the wilderness³³ was, in a real sense, a time of retreat.

Then add to this, your daily disciplines of prayer and Bible study, theological reflection and worship. We should be prioritising these each day and not allowing business to get in the way. My own ministry has been fruitful I believe precisely because I learned the importance of these disciplines. Theological reflection, in particular, has been key to ensuring that my work and my relationship with God are never separated.

This isn't the place for a deep dive into the role of reflection in ministry, but it is worth thinking through a couple of salient points.

What do we mean by theological reflection. Ballard and Pritchard put it succinctly when they state, 'it is quite simply the art of making theology connect with life and ministry so that the gospel truth comes alive.'³⁴ It often involves a cycle of reflection such as that suggested in the diagram below:



We can make those connections in variety of ways – through Bible study tools such as Lectio Divina; through reflections supported by academic writing; through narrative approaches involving conversation with trusted friends or spiritual directors; through art or poetry. However we do it, whatever our preference, the key is to engage.

Collins talks about theological reflection being an accompanied spiritual journey involving the Holy Spirit, Scripture and our own experience. Her work has been

32 Mark 9:1ff is a great example of retreat leading to revelation and the breaking in of God.

33 Mark 1:12

34 Ballard, P, Pritchard, J. (2006). *Practical Theology in Action*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK. p.127.

hugely influential in guiding me into better practice.³⁵ Jesus engaged in it openly – asking questions: ‘What does the scripture say?’ or ‘You have heard that it was said’. He facilitated it in his disciples and modelled it in his retreats. As chaplains it is vital that we follow in his steps. Examples of approaches to theological reflection can be found in the examen booklet provided in the readers pack and in the retreat materials in the appendix to the good chaplain

Favour with Man

Jesus had a social life. He went out for a lot of meals, he went on trips on the local lake, he visited friends. A lot of Jesus’ time is spent not in formal teaching but in informal settings. I remember looking at the gospels and thinking how much space he created for the social aspects of life in his years on earth. It made me revisit my own time.

Do I have time just for me? I was brought up in a home where the protestant work ethic was very strong. You worked as much as you can for as long as you can. Work was important and there was nothing more important. I still have the influence of that attitude hanging over me. If I take a day off, I feel guilty. Entering retirement, I suddenly fill my days with service and additional work. It’s as if I can’t grasp that time for me to enjoy myself is part of God’s plan. The whole concept of Sabbath Rest tells us that work isn’t everything. The example of Jesus’ own life shows how important it is to have time for ourselves and most significantly, time for friends.

Forty years in Christian ministry was made possible through the grace of God and support and generosity of friends who cared for me, encouraged me and corrected me when it was needed. We need to take time to nurture those relationships that will nurture us. If we don’t find the time we will burn out or become exhausted and what use is that to those we are called to serve?

Why not take some time to assess your life’s priorities after reading this chapter?

Why not take the time to engage in the simple retreat that is on offer in the good chaplain’s appendix.

Remember, before you were a chaplain you were a disciple called to relationship with Jesus. Before anything else this is your starting point and your continuing priority as you move forward.

35 Collins, H. (2020). *Reordering Theological Reflection*. London: SCM.

Questions for Reflection:

How do you manage self-care?

What steps can you take to ensure that you have a rhythm of self care established in your ministry for you and any team?

What are your arrangements for supervision and how might they be made more effective?

Reading:

The retreat in the Good Chaplain appendix

Called to be a chaplain (see the online readers folder)

Session 5: Mobilising Volunteers

In the two videos covering this topic we can draw out several key learning points:

Vocation and Calling

Principal to this topic is the question of calling. Every team member, including you, must feel a genuine calling to chaplaincy in general and to chaplaincy in education in particular. George Barna talks about calling be that point at which your skills, your loves and your experience all point in the same direction.³⁶

OS Guinness talks about there being three calls on a person's life.³⁷ The universal call to be in relationship with God is seen in the creation story and echoed in verses such as John 3:16. Then the call to follow Jesus and in turn to help Jesus in the making of disciples in Matthew 28 and finally the call Jesus gives to each of us relating to how best we can serve him. It is this latter call we need to discern in those we invite to join our teams. You can have people in a team who are not called to that particular ministry but they will never be more than just that, team members. For them to be considered chaplain they must have that sense of call. In the Good Chaplain (page 95), Catherine Simpson says that chaplaincy isn't what you do – it's who you are and that phrase captures the essence of calling very well.

Invitation

You can advertise a need for a role and people will apply, be interviewed and appointed in due course. Jesus' approach was to live amongst people and then invite those he had seen and discerned were the right people to do what he wanted. This is an affirming way of building team. Being chosen for a role, having your gifts recognised and acknowledged is a very positive action.

Of course you can make mistakes. Things may not work out. Jesus' team was far from perfect when we think of their story in the gospels. But we are dealing with human beings and need to recognise that we may not always get things right. Steph in the video talks about our starting point in this whole process is prayer. She is absolutely right.

You are praying for the right person to join a team that will fulfil a vision that you have been given by God. If we believe the vision is from God, then we can be encouraged by the fact that he will know what is needed and who is needed to bring that vision to fruition.

36 Barna, G. (2006). A Fish out of Water New York, Integrity Press

37 Guinness, O. (1008). The Call, New York, World Press

Building a team is not easy. Group dynamics can be tricky. Often members will be from different social classes, with different church backgrounds, spiritualities and theologies. There may be differences in age and culture. But Jesus makes it clear in John's gospel that our unity is our greatest witness. In many ways we will become an evangelistic ministry through being team, in the way that God intended, through being a mini model of the kingdom inhabiting our school or college. How did Jesus achieve that level of unity?

He prayed – for each of them (John 17). Praying for and with each other is a Kingdom building principle.

They spent time together so that they knew and understood each other. In three years on the road the disciples must have gained a real sense of what made each other tick. In any team we must provide space for growth – growth in love of God and of each other. It is time well spent and will provide a strong foundation for longevity and effectiveness.

He loved them and called them his friends. I have a friend who leads a team in the South of England and she tells me of how one day when they were setting out on their rounds as community pastors, she watched them walk off down their chosen streets and she realised in watching them go, that she loved them. It came as a surprise to her, but after a while it all made sense. Of course she loved them. These fellow workers, fellow travellers, they each shared a passion a vision and a concern for each other. It is that revelation of love that will be the key to success in our team building.

Questions for Reflection:

How did you discern your own call into chaplaincy?

How might you go about recruiting a team for your local context?

What will be your priorities in maintaining a team in the future?

Reading:

<https://cornerstonebibleacademy.org/how-to-build-and-sustain-effective-ministry-teams-creating-a-culture-of-collaboration-trust-and-mutual-accountability/>

<https://forministryresources.com/building-ministry-teams/>

