

THE

CITY CENTRE CHAPLAINCY

newsletter



Autumn 2003



The Newcastle City Centre Chaplaincy has been established for over 27 years. A Review carried out over the past year has again highlighted the value of the Chaplaincy to businesses. In fact there is an increasing demand for the ministry carried out in the shops and offices of our City. We seek to meet that demand when asked. I am grateful to Mr. Bill Midgley, who has become part of our management committee, for writing in this edition of our newsletter about his experience of our work. The care for people at work, which we provide, is an invaluable resource for all our City.

We thank you for your support.

— Glyn Evans

The Value of Chaplaincy

A Business Point of View from Bill Midgley

About ten years ago, during what passed for my working life, the organisation for which I was Chief Executive experienced a very harrowing event. A young man in his thirties had decided that this world held nothing for him, and one summer afternoon brought his short life to an end by inhaling carbon monoxide fumes. The situation was quite simple. A young and industrious employee had suffered in rapid turn the death of his mother and his aunt, both of whom he had lived with. His life seemed to revolve around his work, but he saw that there would be nothing better than that which existed for him at the time that he took such drastic action. A young man with a well ordered mind who ensured that his work was up-to-date, and left a letter to his Line Manager even apologising for the action that he was taking.

What went wrong? With the young man certainly I, or we as his employers, should have helped him. And how did we miss the pain and the struggle that that individual had in facing up to the problems of life. Perhaps employers are too one sided and they expect those who work for them to get on with the job, and are not too interested in what might seem to be personal problems. That may seem hard, and I know many well meaning firms do counsel their employees. But very often such counselling is short term and after a period of time again staff are left to get on with their lives. There is no doubt that all of us in this incidence to which I refer carried a responsibility and missed something.

We simply did not realise that another human being needed help, and needed help quickly.

Perhaps we all live within our silos, and after a while we stop listening to those cries for help, some which I accept are often disguised. But that incident did indicate to me that employers and individuals all have responsibilities to each other.

It was at that time that I became aware of the real work of the City Centre Chaplaincy, and invited Krister Ottosson to visit the headquarters of my organisation each week to help in providing a counsel service to staff. That was obviously going to be difficult in the early days as many of us are not very good at unburdening our problems, and perhaps view with suspicion someone from the outside who knows little of them, and might just represent management in one form or another.

Over a period of months, however, we built up a system whereby any member of staff was allowed to talk to Krister, preferably outside of the premises, in or out of working hours, whether it be in the Chaplaincy or just over a cup of coffee in one of the local cafes.

To this day I will never know what help Krister, and following him Glyn, have given to those individuals. But what is important is that they have been there to offer help and support when it is so badly needed.

What the Chaplaincy offers must take nothing away from the responsibility of an employer. But often talking to an employer is seen as a weakness, and there remains that invisible fear that any problems might be used against the individual.

Perhaps in ten years time someone may be able to quote real instances of where there has been success in helping some of my former colleagues. But what I have learned is that the role of the Chaplaincy is one which was so badly needed, and if only I had opened my eyes and ears and used it five years before we did then at least one tragic event may never have occurred.



Bill Midgley

formerly of The Newcastle Building Society

Never Hasty in Judgement.

Keep us, O God, from all pettiness.

Let us be large in thought, word and deed.

Let us be done with fault finding and leave off

All self-seeking.

May we put away all pretence and meet each other

Face to face.

May we never be hasty in judgement, and always be generous

Teach us to put into action our better impulses,

To be straightforward and unafraid.

MARY STEWART 16 C.



I just want to warn you, Mr Evans, the rings do not come off easily!

Its lovely to meet you, but PLEASE stop crushing my fingers.

Margaret and Ray Hume of Gosforth suggested a couple of captions for the photograph published in our last newsletter of Queen Sonja shaking hands with Glyn.

Contemplation & Prayer in the Civic Centre's new Peace Room

Prayer Groups at various places of work continue to grow. The Civic Centre prayer Group meet on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 12 noon for half an hour to pray for all who work at the Civic Centre. The Prayer Group meet in the Civic Centre's recently opened Peace Room. The Peace Room is a place of 'peace' for people of all faiths and none. More and more places of work are realising the value of providing a place to 'take time out.' Is this where we will worship in the future, at work? A challenging idea for the Chaplaincy and places of work.

Lent Talks

Our Lent talks earlier this year covered a wide range of issues. The Lord Mayor spoke about Fair Trade. Revd. Jean Skinner about CHRISM (Christians in Secular Ministry), Declan Baharini about our City of Culture Bid, John Holmes spoke on The Great Park – Building a new Community and finally Peter Allan delivered a talk on Corporate Social Responsibility. All those who attended found these talks very thought provoking. Thank you to all our speakers and all who came to listen and ask questions.

Affirming Christians at Work

I have for a long time seen my secular work as part of ministry, both as a layperson and since I was ordained. I categorise my ordained ministerial role as MSE (Minister in secular Employment). I believe our daily work is important and that we can encounter God in our workplace. Yet, how often is your work prayed for in church on Sunday, unless you happen to be a teacher, nurse, doctor or priest? What about all the other forms of employment? Manager, employer, employee. if you work in an office, shop, restaurant or factory? What if you're a tax-inspector, road- sweeper or car park attendant?

Whatever our daily work it is important and it does matter to God. The God we encounter at the Mass (Eucharist) on Sunday is the same God we encounter in the Mess of our Monday to Saturday working lives. It is worth celebrating and praying for, which is why I started to celebrate the Holy Communion on Monday mornings at 7-45am at the church of St. Thomas the Martyr at the Haymarket

(not Bank holidays). The worship is friendly, informal and lasts for 30 minutes. What better way to start your working week? **Jean Skinner**

Service for the Emergency Services

The service held in June was a tremendous success, people lined the streets to listen to the band and to watch the procession of Fire Engine, Police Horses, Ambulance, motor bikes and the assembled dignitary. The Chaplains from the City Centre Chaplaincy and N.I.M. did a marvellous job. The collection was given to the Children's Foundation Whoops appeal.

New Associate Chaplains

The City Centre Chaplaincy has always had close links with other people who care for people at work. The work of the Northumbrian Industrial Mission is well known in our region. The City Centre Chaplains have been made Associate Chaplains of N.I.M. and to cement these links further Revd. Andrew Letby and Revd. Derry Twomey have been made Associate Chaplains in our team. We have worked together on projects such as Worker's Memorial Day and work related issues. It is great to see us learning, working, praying and caring together



Revd. Andrew Letby



Revd. Derry Twomey

Spirituality and the Secular World

On the 16th July of group of clergy and laity from the diocese of Newcastle and Durham met at Shepherds Dene to explore ways in which Shepherds Dene might help those working in the secular world to address issues of spirituality relevant to their working lives.

After much discussion the following points emerged. It was agreed that if such a course were to be offered from Shepherds Dene two clear markets might be identified.

One: Committed Christians who might be targeted through individual parishes or known contact people. This might be a self- financing group meeting at weekends. The course might include opportunities for people to explore their faith and how this relates to their daily secular work. This might be of interest to a number of individuals. Those who wish to take stock and consider the impact their Christian faith has on their working practice. Another group might be young people who are at the beginning of their careers/working life and faith. During a time of reflection they could be helped to explore how they integrate faith and work together.

Two: The corporate market, which has to account for money spent in terms of outcomes and performance. This group may attract

a variety of people. Which may include those who have no faith affiliation, but who might be willing to address issues of spirituality in a language that is theirs and not the churches. The aim being, to contribute to the well being of their places of work and society generally.

When the refurbishments at Shepherds Dene are completed it will be in a position to offer a very different kind of space and environment from the usual high tech conference centres. Comfortable accommodation with good home made food, with its gardens and labyrinth it offers a more tactile and subliminal experience.

The key to any success is to establish what people need. Work environments have to deal with a whole range of issues from responding to the demands from different faith needs at work, death and bereavement, responding to government legislation around spirituality and what that means for your work environment, corporate social responsibility and ethics.

If you think you would like to consider any of these or other issues or register an interest for the future then please contact the chaplaincy department for further information.

Jean Skinner

New Management Committee Members

We welcome onto the Management Committee Mary Coyle from Common Purpose, Brian Adcock from Robson Brown and Claire Morgan from Eversheds. Their experience, knowledge and lively personalities will greatly enhance our work in the City of Newcastle.



Brian Adcock



Claire Morgan



Mary Coyle

A newspaper cutting for your amusement:

Workers' Prayer

Grant me the serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change,

The courage to
change the things I
cannot accept,

And the wisdom to
hide the bodies of
those people I had to
kill today because they annoyed me.

And also, help me to
Be careful of the toes I
Step on today as they
May be connected to the
Ass that I may have to
Kiss tomorrow.

Help me to always
give 100 per cent at
work...

12 per cent on
Monday

23 per cent on
Tuesday

40 per cent on
Wednesday

20 per cent on
Thursday

Five per cent on
Fridays

And help me to
Remember...

When I'm having a really bad day,

And it seems that

People are really trying to wind me up

That it takes 42

muscles to frown and

only four to smile
sarcastically.



Susan O'Donnell, one of our associate Chaplains, recently moved on in her Christian journey. Susan now works full time as a Risk Manager for North Yorkshire Council. We thank Susan for all her hard work for the Chaplaincy. We presented her with three bananas and a small gift.

The following article was written by Susan just before she joined the Chaplaincy. Susan has given us permission to produce it here. God bless your work Susan, and your journey.

Worth the Risk

While listening to the radio recently, I heard a man being interviewed about what he enjoyed doing in his spare time. "Our family 'mystery days'!" he replied, and went on to describe the excitement of piling his kids into the car and setting off for the day without a map, without a planned destination, leaving all of the "turn left/right and straight on" decisions to the kids!

His words stayed with me for a few days. Even though I don't have children of my own, I knew exactly what he meant – but I realised that I've not always viewed the uncertainties of my own journey with excitement, rather fear and worry.

This is due in part to my professional training as a Risk Manager. My days are spent helping organisations look at "what if?" scenarios – identifying and planning for those threats which might prevent them delivering high quality healthcare or commercial products to their customers on time and so on. But this mindset - important in the right circumstances – has subtly influenced my own approach to life too.

In fact, one particular client visit a few years ago highlighted this for me. I'd been struggling with a growing sense of being trapped by my securities. Without actively striving for them, I found myself at 28 with a successful career, good salary, company car and all-round nice lifestyle. Great for a while but I felt God challenging me to move on – but to where? I even began to feel stale in some of the voluntary work I was involved in. I was eager for something new, something different but none of my options felt right.

And this was reflected in my prayer: I often imagined myself standing with one foot on the shore and one foot on a raft, with Jesus on the raft just waiting for me to hop on. But I remained unsure of what was in store for me if I dared to let go of my securities.

This particular day, while waiting for the Risk Manager in the reception area, I scanned the posters on the wall highlighting various risks. Towering above all the others was a beautiful photograph of a yacht sailing off into the sunset simply entitled "RISK". I was puzzled – we were in a hospital – what did shipping risks have to do with clinical care?

Then I noticed the small print below the photograph:

Risk: "You will never discover new horizons until you learn to lose sight of the shore"

Suffice to say, it hit me like a tonne of bricks!

A few months later, I made a decision to go around the world for a year. Travelling was the last thing I wanted to do as I'd never had any great desire to see the world. But it was the only thing that felt right and I simply felt "propelled" to do it. My only real desire was to "set sail", essentially to experience a year with God as my only real certainty.

Once I'd made the decision and began researching (old habits die hard!), that old "conspiracy of events" kicked in and I was left in no doubt that this was the raft God wanted me to take! Courses, voluntary work, accommodation and finances just fell into place and I set off, though many of them didn't fall into place until I was well en-route.

Funnily enough, when I did the Spiritual Exercises in Guelph at the end of my time away Jesus had quite a job to get me *off* the raft!! I won't tell you how many repetitions I had to do of the "walking on water" passage before I actually got off the boat! You'd think I'd have learned!! But now that my travels were coming to an end, I was beginning to worry about my next stepping stone.

Well, it's now two years since my return to the UK and God has provided many stepping stones for me since then though I've learned that I often have to step off one stone before the next one appears!

So I thank God for parental figures like the man on the radio. His sheer enjoyment of being with his children is teaching them some profound truths about taking responsibility and taking risks. and to see this process not as something to fear but as an adventure leading to new and exciting treasures.

SUSAN O'DONNELL

Issues at Work.

We are coming across many issues at work which we are trying to address. Audrey McCartan has been working hard on a Bereavement Consultancy. This has arisen (excuse the pun!) because we felt one of the areas we can provide knowledgeable input was in dealing with a death at work. We have already spoken with some companies about this and they have welcomed our initiative. There are other areas such as Culture and Diversity issues. The amount of interest in what the Chaplaincy can provide only goes to show how increasingly we will be required.

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St Thomas the Martyr



Rev. Glyn Evans



Deaconess Eunice Attwood



Canon Chris Savage



Rev. Jean Skinner

EVENTS AND INFORMATION

Wednesday
8th October,
5.30pm

Human City/City of God

Urban visions in the Christian Tradition
William Leech lecture by Professor Philip Sheldrake
Professor of Applied Christian Theology
University of Newcastle
Curtis Auditorium, Herschel Building

Tuesday s
1.10pm – 1.50pm

Newcastle upon Tyne Mid-day Services

Brunswick Methodist Church
Service and Preacher

Monday
29th September, 2003
12.30pm

Pulpit Debate – Regional Government

Salvation or Sell Out
St. Ann's Church, Breamish Street.

Mondays
7.45am

Affirming Christians at Work

Communion Service
St Thomas the Martyr Church
Haymarket

'OASIS'

at Brunswick Methodist Church. Quiet time of prayer and reflection.
12.45pm – 1.15pm each Tuesday

BOOKS

'90,000 hours' – Managing the world of work as a christian by Rodney Green. Church on Sunday Work on Monday by Jossey Bass. Counselling in the Workplace by John McLeod.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

THE INDUSTRIAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP –

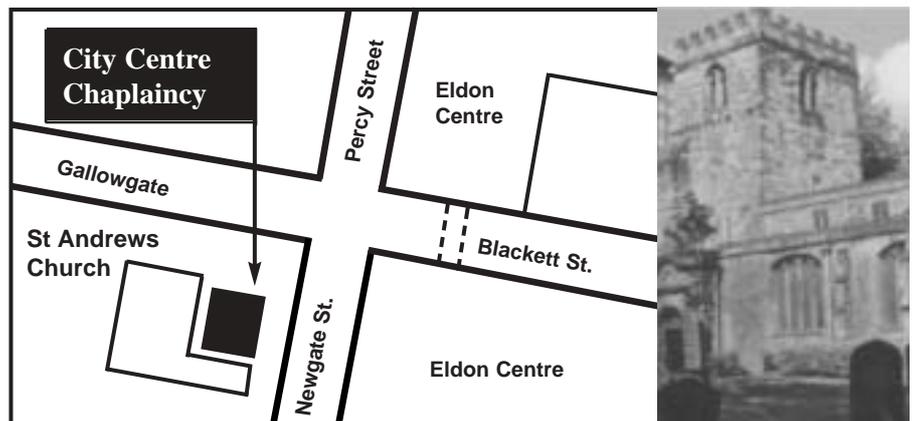
www.icf-online.org

CHRISTIANS AT WORK

E-Broadcasts are available from Christians at Work –
Work.office@christiansatwork.org.uk

Subscription/Sponsors & Donations

The Chaplaincy is grateful for all the donations it receives which help it continue its work in the City.



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