

Growing chaplaincy

At a time when we are hearing about the growing secular nature of our society, it may be surprising to hear that, in Bath and Wells, nearly every month there is a call from an organisation enquiring about getting a chaplain. The calls come from all types of settings - from private companies, public sector organisations and educational institutions – and in the last six years, over 60 new chaplaincies have been established.

Mike Haslam, Chaplaincy Lead for Bath and Wells says, “While some chaplaincies have been initiated by local churches, the overwhelming majority have been requested by the organisations themselves, and they have mostly never before had



Chaplaincy are present in a range of settings across Bath and Wells. any Christian or other spiritual ministry in their setting. People are seeking the spiritual Christian presence a chaplain can offer - it continues to amaze me, and I thank God for it.”

Chaplaincy in Bath and Wells come in all forms – lay and ordained, full time and part time, young and old, from all Christian denominations. They can be found in schools and hospitals, but also in golf clubs and the courts, walking the hedgerows and at power stations.

Explaining their popularity,

Mike says, “Chaplaincy are part of the team where they are based – dealing with the same codes, policies, culture and joys, but no-one has to talk to a chaplain so there is also that element of being a guest that can prove very powerful.”

While chaplaincy is going from strength to strength in Bath and Wells, and across the country, it's not all sunshine and roses. Mike explains, “It can be a vulnerable position. It's not always easy to measure a chaplaincy's success within the frameworks of either organisation or the church. However, I have enormous hope for the future of chaplaincy as together with our churches we seek to share with our communities the good news of Jesus.” ■

News in brief

Beach baptism for Jacob

On a sunny Sunday in the summer, the community of St. Peter's, Portishead gathered for the baptism of youth member, Jacob.

Explaining his choice of a baptism on the beach, Jacob says, "I wanted to do it like they did in the Bible. Someone else did it and I thought it sounded really cool, also being on the beach is really cool."

The open setting led to conversations with some members of the public, providing an opportunity to share their beliefs with others in the community ■



Church opens new community fridge

A community fridge has been opened at St George's, Wilton. The fridge seeks to address the problem of food waste by creating a space for local residents and businesses to exchange surplus food. It has been made possible thanks to support from environmental organisation, Hubbub UK, and sponsorship from Taunton Town Council.

The fridge will be accessible every Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9.30am to 5pm. It offers individuals the opportunity to obtain up to five items of quality food that might have otherwise gone to waste ■

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

A new bishop for Lusaka

Archbishop Albert Chama has been enthroned as the new Bishop of Lusaka in Zambia. His enthronement took place at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka, on Sunday, 3 September. The service was a combined celebration of the Enthronement and the Diamond Jubilee of the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross.

Bishop Michael sent Archbishop Albert a message on behalf of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, saying, “Although we are separated by many thousands of miles we are together today in the gift of the Spirit and in the light of the Gospel. We celebrate your ministry and that of all God's people in Lusaka Diocese.” ■

What an opportunity!

By Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton

This week I was on a Zoom chat with some of our chaplains around the diocese. I meet regularly with eight or nine of them alongside our Chaplaincy Development Adviser Mike Haslam. These are only a few of the more than 300 chaplains we have, of all ages, lay and ordained, across Bath and Wells. There are more and more enquiries about chaplaincy from a wide range of communities. They are seeking a chaplain to offer pastoral care and well-being support for an increasingly stressed and anxious workforce. One enquiry caught my attention this week.

A local Further Education college has been saying that their first concern is for a chaplain to address the spiritual exploration of its students. What an opportunity!

We know from the Talking Jesus research (2015 and 2022) that most practising Christians come to faith before the age of 18. Several of our schools, including primary, have pupil chaplains now and this is a great way of recognising that you are never too young to start in living and telling the story of Jesus!

As a child I was always struck by the Old Testament story of the unnamed little slave girl who served Naaman's wife, (2 Kings chapter 5). Taken from her home to another country, she was the one who introduced Naaman to Elisha the prophet in Israel. As a result, Naaman overcame his scepticism, was healed from his leprosy, and discovered a faith in God.

Chaplaincy opens up a diversity of contexts in which we can share our faith and I invite you to pray

for those here in Bath and Wells who are treading new ground to open up the way for others to discover the love of Jesus for themselves. However, each one of us has our own possibility of being a chaplain, coming alongside another in our daily life and community. Sometimes our timidity prevents us from speaking up about faith and our personal spiritual journey other than in church where we are known and on familiar territory. How about taking some time to reflect on where you might live and tell the story of Jesus outside of church, in your everyday context? Is there someone, like a Naaman's wife who is desperate to find help and hope for a loved one but doesn't know where to find it? Maybe you are the only one who could tell them!

Bishop Ruth

God's representative

The Revd Katy Garner, former Rector of Backwell, talks chaplaincy ahead of her licensing as Chaplain at Bath Spa University.

What's prompted the move from parish ministry?

I just felt that this is where God was calling me to be, despite the fact that Backwell is a very exciting place to be right now and is growing in spirituality.

Why university chaplaincy?

You could say I am very comfortable in a student setting. After a career in nursing, and a five-year gap to have a family, I decided to get a degree. A year of Open University study, a three-year degree at the University of the West of England, a PhD and a period as a Post Doc at Bristol University followed.

What do think university chaplaincy offers?

Universities offer students the most exciting part of their education –



The Revd Katy Garner, new Chaplain for Bath Spa University.

they are set free, on their own, and for some that's an amazing and life-giving experience, but for a lot of people it can be very difficult and they need support.

How will you offer support?

As this is a new role, it will first be about journeying with students and staff to determine how chaplaincy can feature in this university. There is a secret garden with a fire pit, and I can have an allotment, so there's a

lot of potential for activities that tie in caring for creation, and therefore ourselves. I'll also be taking along my dog as a care dog. As a chaplain you are not necessarily talking about God, but I absolutely view myself as God's representative in that place.

What are you looking forward to most?

Ministering to this diverse, creative bunch of individuals is going to be really exciting and a real blessing for me. I hope I can become someone they can know and feel confident about to coming to with any problems, but also to share their joys.

Hear more from Katy at:

bathandwells.org.uk/gods-representative

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