



CAMBRIDGESHIRE WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY

Lights under Bushels – reflections on a survey

Three of our trustees, Clive Morton, Paul Ballard and Jenny Kartupelis conducted some research into “Spirituality in the Workplace” with the assistance of a number of Cambridgeshire Workplace Chaplaincy chaplains and other chaplains in 2016 and 2017. The summary results are below for your interest. Clive, Paul and Jenny would be interested in any comments and ideas for further research you may have.

Firstly, a big 'thank you' to those chaplains who helped us with our research into chaplaincy in 2016 and 2017. The findings were presented to the International Association of Management, Spirituality & Religion at the University of Arkansas in May 2017.

HIGHLIGHTS

Results of our research show that:

- *There is more interest in 'spirituality in the workplace' and in 'meaning in life' in current times of stress and anxiety*
- *Chaplains are seen to be effective at dealing with issues of spirituality, meaning in life and often related mental health issues*
- *Chaplains are energised and motivated by their work; and those in the workplace value their input and intervention*
- *Regrettably, churches and denominations often are unaware or uninterested in the work of chaplains*
- *The entrepreneurial approach adopted by many chaplains in their daily work could be a learning model for churches*

From a Cambridgeshire Workplace Chaplaincy viewpoint, it would seem, that chaplains do need to cooperate and exchange information to ensure they get the support and recognition they need from their churches, either directly or via a church-endorsed networking organisation.

The aims

To establish firstly, in the climate that exists in many working environments today, of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) whether individuals are more likely to seek answers on "meaning" and issues of "spirituality" than hitherto. Secondly, to explore the experience of chaplaincy in the workplace in dealing with the issues of "spirituality" and "meaning in life" that arise.

What did the language mean?

Studies over the last 100 years have shown that pressures in the workplace have led individuals to question "what's it all about?" On occasion, such questioning has led to raising issues of "Spirituality" and "Meaning in Life". In line with much current literature by "Spirituality" we mean the need to have a sense of integration in life; connectedness with self, others, the natural world and the transcendent: "Meaning in Life" is understood as the search for a sense of belonging which gives shape and direction to life.

How did we go about the study?

The experience of chaplains was sought in Phase 1 by structured questionnaire followed by data analysis (results below). Based on the initial analysis, Phase 2 was initiated by using structured interviews to obtain case study material giving more depth to the data analysis, and further, to add to existing studies on the changing role of chaplains in today's work places.

What were the results?

Phase 1 Quantitative data from structured questionnaires

25 completed questionnaires from chaplains were received and analysed. A wide range of workplaces, from prisons, courts and police to health organisations, education and local government to industry were represented.

Many respondents have had long experience of chaplaincy ranging between 5 and over 20 years (average 9.3 years); 64% operate within multi faith chaplaincies. Many chaplains report incidences of issues of spirituality and meaning in life being related to situations and influences both from inside and outside the workplace.

VUCA, as defined above, undoubtedly has impact (particularly within Health, Education, Prisons and Police) - 45% of chaplains reported that there was greater interest in 'Spirituality', and 58% reported greater interest in 'Meaning in Life'.

However, several chaplains report that personal crises within the lives of individuals are often seen as the cause of questioning of such fundamentals. In sum, the role of the chaplain is needed more than ever before!

Phase 2 Qualitative data from structured interviews

23 workplace chaplains (7 overlapped the respondents in Phase 1) participated in hour long Telephone or face to face interviews. The chaplains were based around the Midlands and East of England. In terms of faith and denomination 10 were Church of England, 6 Baptist, 5 Methodist, and 2 Free Church. Regarding involvement in sectors in the economy, 20 work in the public sector, (8 in

Health; 5 in Education; 2 in Prisons; 1 in Fire Service; 4 in Local Authorities) and 3 in commercial/charity sectors.

Pattern and nature of chaplaincy work

The practice shows a rare degree of consistency being applied bearing in mind that there is no 'national' standard or formula for workplace chaplaincy. It is very clear how dedicated our chaplains are in supporting staff and others through the crises in their lives; and equally how much their achievements and contributions are 'hidden from view'.

The majority of chaplains saw the model of their work as a focus on 'well-being' and 'pastoral' and the mode as 'being there' or 'loitering with intent'. Although the focus for chaplains is on the individual, they are often also integrated into the structure of the organisation to such a degree as to have influence on policy and strategy and sometimes in a role of mediation.

They are often seen by management as having 'antennae' or sensitivity on mood and morale. However, chaplains are at pains to maintain, in order to keep everyone's trust, a neutral role. In contrast to some practice in the US, they are not seen as an extension to human resources functions or with a focus on employee engagement and productivity, except in the sense of helping individuals through difficult or stressful times. Chaplains in public service organisations such as health, prisons and education will typically either have access to, or work within, multi-faith teams.

Definitions of 'spirituality at work'

The locus could be summarised as: connectedness/belonging/meaning and direction in life/hope, meaning and purpose/transcendent. Chaplains often experienced that people were looking for connectedness, belonging and affirmation.

How do chaplains feel about such encounters?

Chaplains are energised feeling privileged to be involved in this way, and can see positive results of the pastoral counselling work that they are able to do. Naturally the work is not without its frustrations as the origins of 'VUCA' or, separately, personal crises cannot be wished away in terms of their impact on individuals. The stories, told anonymously, show graphically the enormous added value of the role of chaplain in their organisations.

What can be done to improve the situation?

1. Chaplains believe that their work is undervalued, or not even seen, by churches or denominations, because their place of work and their mode of working doesn't fit with congregational or parish ministry. The point was made by several chaplains that their modus operandi is 'Franciscan' - "being out there, alongside people, speaking their language"; whereas the typical modus for the congregation or parish based church is 'Benedictine' - "come in, join us and conform". The gap in ownership and dialogue requires action by both churches and chaplains. The chaplain's typically entrepreneurial approach could provide a model for churches. In the Church of England, it has been suggested, there would be benefit in having a national "Bishop for Chaplains", which could be paralleled in other traditions.
2. It is clear, that chaplains need support, even though they do have a level of recognition. In Health and Prison settings, there is often peer group and team support. However, the lone

chaplain in the Fire service, Police, Education or industry, for example, requires external and/or peer support.

3. Chaplaincy budgets within organisations served have been squeezed in a time of austerity. We recommend that the role of chaplains in the 'culture of compassionate care' is properly valued by employers.
4. Employers in most cases recognise and value the work of chaplains. However, with the demise of manufacturing and heavy industry, 'industrial' chaplains are much rarer and the service industries have not inherited the practice. The private sector presents an untapped field of application and improvement.
5. When employers consider the 'well-being' and 'duty of care' agenda in their policy and practice formulation they should give greater consideration to the spiritual and mental health needs of their employees. Clearly, the current attention is patchy and many more employees could benefit from chaplaincy, as could the organisations and businesses that suffer due to neglect in this vital area.

We would be delighted to participate in a dialogue with interested Colleagues. We recommend you dip into the full paper, which can be found on www.umbrianretreats.com

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Trustees of Cambridgeshire Workplace Chaplaincy