



*Dungeness Power Station – one of our workplaces*

# Annual Review 2021

Registered Charity: 1105783

Local Ecumenical Partnership of Churches Together in Kent

# Introduction

*Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones - Chair of Trustees*

For so many of us the last year has been challenging, complicated, and full of both welcome and unwelcome changes. KWM team members, volunteers and trustees have shown incredible resilience as the charity has had to be ready to respond to so much that has been unsettled and uncertain in many workplaces with employees working from home or in covid secure environments. Some chaplains have continued to support workplaces in person, others have been limited to email and phone contact with colleagues.

KWM Chaplains have been carriers of peace through their engagement and presence with those they connect with whether face to face or digitally. We pray for them that the Prince of Peace might lead and equip them and that those who have felt an absence of peace in the ups and downs of life might feel able to reach out to chaplains for reassurance and support.

As we move in to 2022 Trustees will be prayerfully considering ways in which they can continue to equip and support chaplains and workplaces across Kent and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.



KWM is a community of Christians from different denominations who are committed to living out Jesus' discipleship in the workplaces of Kent, We are convinced that God's love for the world includes our daily workplaces.

During 2021 Kent Workplace Mission had an average of forty chaplains serving a variety of workplaces across Kent, some working individually, others as part of a team.

The locations where KWM chaplains serve are varied and include shopping centres, large transport hubs and a power station.

### Locations of KWM Chaplains

ASDA Ashford	Dungeness Power Station	Port of Dover
Bexleyheath	Eurotunnel	Connors House
Birkbeck and Anerley	Medway Council	Canterbury
Bluewater		Gravesham Council



## *Intentional Presence*

The day-to-day work of the chaplain is to meet people “where they are” and make connections with them, whether they have faith or not. It is being known to be a non-judgemental “listening ear” that someone can turn to when they are in need.

To get to this point relationships need to be established and built up in a quiet way over time – this is the work of a chaplain.



## **How the pandemic affected the work of KWM’s Chaplains**

*Susan Randall - Team Support Coordinator*

Two years on from the start of the Covid 19 Pandemic in March 2020 our world has changed and sadly, the NHS remains over-stretched. Also, the restrictions meant that many of our locations were, sadly, closed to non-operational workers and some of our volunteer chaplains had to shield, either on their own behalf or for their families.

Whilst direct work with individuals was much less, inventive ways have been found – from a supermarket chaplain excluded from staff areas but maintaining contact with store workers whilst shopping, on-line video calls, meeting at outdoor smoking areas and even some taking funerals for the families of our usual clientele.

Into this scenario came a change of Team Support Co-ordinator as Jacky retired and I took over from her in June 2021. On the pages that follow are reports from some of the chaplaincies and chaplains supported by Kent Workplace Mission.



## Interesting times

### *Mark Ball - KWM Co-ordinating Chaplain*

My first year in post began with the preparation and delivery of our Consultative Strategic Review, an opportunity to take stock of where we had got to and reflect together on where we needed to be going. The process identified seven achievable goals, which have formed the basis of my work throughout the year, and are informing the agenda of Ops Group and Trustee meetings:

1. **Digital**

*Develop attractive and useful digital presence and engagement for:*

- a. shop window marketing to the workplace*
- b. resourcing chaplains on the ground (website; networking; online training)*

2. **Trustees**

*Review meeting agenda to re-focus, re-engage and re-energise trustees and wider team*

3. **Chaplains**

*Develop ongoing chaplaincy fellowship and networking with integrated, accredited training and peer learning to compliment current occasional gatherings*

4. **Projects**

*Develop attractive, accessible resource packages and protocols for new chaplaincy project set-up support*

5. **Hotline**

*Explore setting up a telephone chaplaincy hotline*

6. **Church**

*Proactive promotion of KWM offer to Church through direct, personal, regular connection with regional denominational leads, bodies, local churches, individuals, and ecumenical groups, both existing partners and others, with an eye to identifying new opportunities for establishing and developing chaplaincy partnerships and potential funding sources*

7. **Work**

*Marketing our presence and service to workplaces across the county, with an eye to identifying new opportunities for establishing and developing chaplaincy and potential funding sources*

Working with a Kent developer our new website ([kentworkplacemission.org](http://kentworkplacemission.org)) was launched, and our email systems updated.

Then followed the appointment and transition process for Susan becoming our new Team Support Coordinator in May.

Despite lockdown life, we were blessed to welcome Martyn Saunders as the new Lead Chaplain with Medway Council, and Jennie Long to the Bexleyheath team. Jeff Hawthorne and the Anerley and Birkbeck project (begun at the end of 2020) continued to flourish throughout the year too.

Seeking to support our chaplains through lockdown and then re-emerging into workplaces, our online Weekly Fellowship was extended to twice weekly gatherings. On Wednesdays 10am-11am and Fridays 11am-12pm, we attracted chaplains and supporters to share in reflective bible reading and prayer. The readings and access details are uploaded to the website, and everyone is welcome to join any time:

[https://www.kentworkplacemission.org/page-weekly\\_fellowship.html](https://www.kentworkplacemission.org/page-weekly_fellowship.html)

In July, I represented us at Bishop James's retirement service at Rochester Cathedral, where it was good to give thanks for all his encouragement and advocacy of chaplaincy.

August saw me serving refreshments at the YMCA Dartford Fun Day, with our affiliated chaplain, Penny Culliford. It was a lovely way to learn more about the real-life impact chaplaincy can have within an organisation and a wider community.

I became a trustee of Workplace Chaplaincy Mission UK, and in October co-taught their six-week online introductory course, with twelve participants - five from Kent!

We promoted Living Wage Week in November, with resources for sharing made available on the website and Facebook, connecting with others working for the welfare and wellbeing of our nation's workers.

Other highlights throughout the year have included networking with Kent churches exploring chaplaincy as a model of missional community engagement, working with individuals exploring vocation to chaplaincy, and sharing in the wider ecumenical life of the Church at local, regional, and national levels.

Throughout the year, it has been a joy and privilege to represent KWM and to regularly share something of who we are and what we do with Sunday congregations and mid-week meetings across the county and further afield.

And as the year ended, it was exciting to be looking ahead to the new opportunities 2022 would bring to continue to help shape and facilitate our shared life and mission. Thank you for your continued prayerful support and encouragement.



## ASDA, Ashford

*Joy Brumwell - Chaplain*

I have lost count of the years I have been chaplain at ASDA. As in previous reports I visit twice weekly for about an hour.

There has been little change during the year except it is becoming more difficult to have meaningful conversations with colleagues. They do not have time to stop as shelves have to be kept stocked and there are fewer people to do that. Since the canteen was refurbished and become rather clinical in its furnishings, colleagues are withdrawing into themselves spending their breaks on mobile phones - again making contact difficult.

However, new colleagues are always surprised to hear I am there for them as the store's chaplain and they are appreciative of knowing there is someone to talk to if needed.



## Bexleyheath High Street

*Jane Linington, Jennie Long, John and Marilyn Ormes - Chaplains*

It feels good to be able to visit all our shops freely once more. And thanks to Jennie joining our team, we are gradually adding more shops to our list. John continues to visit ASDA.

The people we visit are always glad to see us and it is a joy to see the shops and cafes gradually getting more customers. Even though the worst of the pandemic seems to be over, businesses are still struggling financially, as well as with the personal problems which have been made worse by the pandemic. For many of them there are health (physical and mental) problems or worry about family members.

It was good to welcome Mark to Bexleyheath at the end of October, when we commissioned Jennie as one of the team. Jennie is proving to be a huge asset, having a natural rapport with the people we visit and very much enjoying the contact. She has slotted into the team extremely well and we are so glad to be working with her. We would still welcome chaplains from other churches/faiths but that does not seem to be opening up for us at the moment.

ASDA staff are going through a difficult time, with staff shortages meaning some of them have to work long hours. This makes the chaplaincy visits even more important but, in some ways more difficult, as staff have very limited time to talk.



## Birkbeck and Anerley

*Jeff Hawthorne - Chaplain*



The Lord has blessed and expanded the chaplaincy this year, despite the adverse circumstances we have faced in 2021. We started the year with a prayer walk and then helping prepare children's lunch boxes which a local café was donating to our church foodbank; this was also a good way of getting to know the café staff better.

As restrictions eased, I distributed packs of sunflower seeds to all the local businesses as a symbol of the life and hope we celebrate at Easter. These were well received by everyone, including the chip shop planting them in their new outdoor seating flower display. Their beautiful flowers particularly blessed the area, including a neighbouring rival café! Growing sunflowers provided excellent conversation starters, including how tall they were, flower size and the impact of slugs and snails.



I am now visiting almost all the shops, cafés, and businesses in the area around the main road, including the pub, the crematorium, and the undertakers. Through the weekly visits I have got to know people a lot better during the year, learning more about the lives and hopes of everybody and people look forward to the visits. I have developed some very strong relationships and been able to support them through difficulties, including providing a character reference when needed and emotional support following break-ins and shoplifting.



I enjoy taking photos on my phone of the local country park and I often show these on my visits to lift people's spirits with the beauty of Creation. Some photos have been used in the country park's calendar which some businesses have purchased to support the park.

I have also shared these photos on the community social media groups to promote wellbeing in the area which the businesses appreciate.



I have developed links with a local community initiative and met with police to get more support for the area at the request of some of the shops. I have also made links with other local churches to build the ecumenical nature of the chaplaincy and it was a real blessing to have four churches involved in the community carol singing we organised at a local restaurant. This is our third year there and despite the rain, many people joined in singing to celebrate our Lord's birth.

We were particularly blessed by friends visiting from the House of Bread church in Bethlehem who distributed Christmas decorations to nearly all the businesses, so they had something celebrating Jesus' birth from where Jesus was born. The KWM Christmas cards were also very well received, and the local area has flourished this year, despite adverse circumstances.



A big thank you again to the local churches and to Mark, Susan and the KWM team for all their support.



## Bluewater

*Mark Ball, Tom Brown, Mike Dale, David Green, John Hougham, Jacqueline Littlewood, Mary Olowu, Paul and Valerie Winchester - Chaplains*

Our chaplaincy team of nine was physically restricted, but very much spiritually engaged, throughout the year's Covid experience. We were able to remind all Bluewater staff and retailers of our continued availability, and shifted our weekly fellowship on-line, which allowed more of us to be together more often for simple Bible study and prayer.

The second half of the year saw us re-emerge, as the mall stirred back to life, and we all felt joyfully surprised at the extent to which we had been missed and the ease with which pastoral relationships picked up where they had been left off.

Here are some of the volunteers' reflections on their experience of chaplaincy this year:

*I was particularly struck by people sharing some of their deep life stories with me. It was really humbling to hear and is not something I will ever take for granted.*

Tom



*I notice that staff in M&S, when they get a chance, are very happy to have a chat, perhaps more so now than before the pandemic.*

Mike

*People have been more welcoming of our visits since the virus and lockdown because everyone is more aware of mental fragility, and so appreciative of anyone showing care and concern. I was asked to visit a 40-year-old shop assistant who was losing their accommodation, because of a rent increase she could not afford. I took her some information about a local church housing association, which was not right for her in the end; but she has found a bedsit and has been so appreciative of my visits. People really value having someone to talk to when times are tough!*

Valerie

*When we could not visit in the early part of the year, I assumed I would be forgotten, but people were so pleased to see me back in the mall and said how much they had missed our chats. Those conversations have varied enormously, as they always do; helping someone come to terms with becoming a carer for an aging mother; being asked to pray for a wayward child; for a partner with cancer; and for better job opportunities; listening to concerns about low footfall and falling sales. We are there for the big and the small issues - to show God's love.*

Dave



## Medway Council

### *Martyn Saunders and Rathini Mills - Chaplains*

We are linked to Medway Council as chaplain to the employees there. Chaplaincy at the Council has entered a new phase recently as the pandemic has brought desk occupancy down to about 8% compared to 2019 and looks set to remain low as both employees and their employer realise the benefits of working from home. This makes chance encounters more haphazard with most people engaging with the life of the Council offices from a distance. It was good to be able to offer a reflection video for Remembrance Day alongside the Chief Executive and to run monthly prayer meetings on Zoom. Do pray for wisdom in engaging more of the work force and becoming recognised as someone appropriate to turn to at times of need or challenge.



# Dungeness 'B' Power Station

*Les Carter - Chaplain*

My normal pattern of weekly visits has been severely disrupted by the restrictions and concerns regarding Covid, and my visit to the Power Station ceased at the time of the "lock-down" in the spring of 2020 and recommenced during the summer of 2021. My return was delayed slightly due to procedural issues regarding clearance.



Visits generally last around four hours, and consist of speaking to staff in non-plant areas, such as offices, mess rooms, and workshops. Pre-Covid I would have lunch in the canteen with staff, but various controls on site mean this has stopped for now.

Since September 2018, both reactors at Dungeness 'B' have been off-line due to technical issues and therefore there has been no electrical generation; however, staff have been working very hard to maintain the plant in good order and to resolve the issues to allow start-up. Unfortunately, EDF, the French owners, announced in June 2021 that the station would, with immediate effect, move into the de-fuelling phase, which is the first stage of decommissioning. The most recent prediction had been that the station would generate until 2028, so this announcement was a huge disappointment.

De-fuelling and decommissioning will take many years and staff will be employed on site throughout, although the numbers will vary for the different phases. Presently the number of staff on site remains at approximately 650 which includes both EDF staff and contract partners.

My Chaplaincy at Dungeness B commenced during 2015 and I judge that the chaplaincy has now been established and staff are aware of my visits, trust me, know that I am a volunteer and that I am independent from their employer. I wear a hi-vis waistcoat with my name and function clearly displayed.

As chaplain my return in the summer appeared to be welcomed and many commented that they had missed my visits. There have been occasions where discussions have resulted in direct actions, for example, providing useful contacts, but most conversations are trivial and just keeping in touch and being available, "a friendly sounding board." I believe that it is important to some that they can have a conversation with a person in the work-environment who they know, is open about their faith, has no hidden agenda, non-judgemental, and is not accountable to their employer.

I judge that the decommissioning will lead to challenging times ahead for the employees, and I trust with God's help that as a KWM chaplain, I can in some way provide support.



# Port of Dover, Eurotunnel, and Kent Emergency Chaplains Scheme

*David Slater – Chaplain and Secretary to the Trustees*

The year started in the aftermath of the French total border closure which had seen thousands of lorries and individuals trapped in Dover, or on motorways, as the Kent Police plan assumed 'they would return home', ignoring the fact that home was on the continent. The increased Brexit rules which came into force on 4 January, and which were expected to cause delays, were quite quiet in comparison.

Visits to the Port and Eurotunnel continued weekly, but most offices are closed with people furloughed or working from home. The few that that were around were genuinely pleased to be able to talk and discuss issues. Passenger services are greatly reduced and although this would usually be a quiet time, both the Port and Eurotunnel were sometimes eerily silent. Some good things have come out of the pre-Christmas chaos:

- Dover District Council (DDC) has invited Chaplains and Street Pastors to visit their CCTV Emergency Control rooms and we have started bi-monthly meetings.
- We gained funding for KECS training and PPE (Hi-Vis jackets)
- DDC and Kent Resilience Team (KRT) have re-realized the value of volunteers on the ground and plans are being drawn up for resources to be stored in accessible places, not just a 'Rest Centre' mode of operation
- KRT have established a new working group to deal with Spontaneous Volunteers and I am the only faith related person involved. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and the new lead for the KRT Vulnerable Persons Community Cell are all DDC officers, providing a useful link. They will 'only provide to drivers who cannot help themselves.' They accept there is a risk of gridlock in Dover but see no need for help from faith groups from elsewhere
- Local Christians, co-ordinated by Chaplains, were on standby over the summer in case of delays and gridlock, but one of the perverse benefits of Covid was the lack of passengers able to travel

At the Port of Dover (PoD) there have been many changes of Senior personnel which has made chaplaincy visits difficult. The new Police Manager has re-introduced a Neighbourhood Policing team which is working well with the chaplains.

Both PoD and Eurotunnel (ET) have both suffered from losses in traffic. ET has appealed for volunteers for severance as they downsize, taking away many UK managers.

During the year, the PoD Chaplaincy office was relocated to the Terminal Control Building. In theory this would make it easier for outside visitors but the Covid Regulations (ie the more restrictive of France or England at any point in time), plus the National Security Level raised

to 'Severe' makes any visits difficult. At least the team are all fully vaccinated and for many months benefited from frequent Lateral Flow Tests at the Border Force facility.

During the year we have boosted our team with:

- the Revd. Catherine Tucker, Rector of the Anglican Dover Town Team, providing a good link between Town and Port, some of the chaplains provided additional pastoral support at a funeral with many un-churched young people
- Mike Fitzpatrick, a Ship Visitor with Stella Maris, who will be helping with our cargo ships
- We still hope to get a retail chaplaincy going, but Covid has given severe restrictions

Migrants are still a big problem in Dover from which the chaplains and other faith groups are excluded. Border Force have a contract with British Red Cross as the only organisation recognised to provide welfare services. The Government funded REACT and VCSEP organisations are also looking to take over all voluntary activities in the area. We lack ways of supporting migrants who are trying to return to Europe but have no recourse to public funds.



*Left to Right: Archbishop Justin Welby, Billy Hollis, David Slater, Catherine Tucker, John Fogarty*

The Chaplaincy was visited in September by the Bishop of Dover as part of a tour of local churches. And in December, the Chaplaincy arranged a visit by the Archbishop of Canterbury in December to see the RNLI and PoD.

I took the funeral of a retired Port of London employee who had wanted their own chaplain, but Covid travel restrictions meant they had to have someone local with maritime connections. There have been a number of other similar situations and KWM has benefited from the fees.



Covid has meant there have been no public events at the PoD this year, but as Lead Chaplain I took a service for the Royal Artillery Association at their cliff top memorial (picture left).

A number of people with wreaths 'happened' to be on the Sea Front for 11am on Merchant Navy Day, and The Torch of Remembrance service at the Western Docks on 9

November was limited to sixty people, but better than 6 in 2020. Hopefully, there will be 300+ next year when we have booked the Bishop of Dover for the service celebrating the 100th anniversary of its unveiling by her predecessor.

There were seventy-five staff gathered in silence at Eurotunnel on 11 November, and I preached at Dover Castle on Remembrance Sunday.

In anticipation of appeals by KWM and KECS Mark Ball and I are trying to re-establish contact with, or even the existence of, Churches Together Groups across the county.

Using Zoom I joined a Churches Together Ramsgate Ministers' Breakfast, and other local meetings such as Churches Together Folkestone / Christians Together in Dover / Diocese of Canterbury and Ashford Area Deans.

Zoom has enabled national meetings such as Workplace Mission UK and the South East Port Welfare Committee of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB). Only later in the year were meetings in person possible, such MNWB-PWC AGM at Gravesend and Kent Voluntary Sector Emergency Group at Gun Wharf Medway.

Travel Restrictions have limited the holiday opportunities for the Chaplaincy Team and those we minister to. Weariness, even burn-out, has been a risk.

Covid Omicron restrictions stopped office visits just as we started to get going again and French Border closures due to Covid meant most of December was very quiet. There has been very little chance to do much face-to-face actual chaplaincy recently, but hopefully opportunities will reopen in 2022.



## Rapport Care Home, Connors House, Canterbury

*Christine Barker - Chaplain*

Nothing has changed! True, we have been in lockdown for two years and yes, true, nothing has changed. Pushing open the door a cheery hello is heard, I feel welcome.

It has been so hard these past months, caring, watching, being denied normal access to what is normal human interaction. When I say 'nothing has changed' I am talking about the room in the centre of the Home, the kitchen, where meals continue to be prepared day in day out, lockdown or not. The clatter of plates and hot water gushing into the sink, warm, welcoming, homely sounds. And that is before the enticing aromas circling the room.

Life continues whatever outward restrictions apply. Needs continue to be met nourishing body and mind. That has been the paradox of the past two years as kitchen staff and carers have continued to bring normality into the lives of residents here at Connors House amidst abnormal restrictions. It has been tough, still is. Only this week, management spoke about their “déjà vu” moment as Covid 19 struck once more. Thankfully only a handful of staff and residents have been afflicted this time. Last January so many became ill, the fall to the virus constant, sadly many died. Throughout a very gruelling year, not only was the kitchen a source of normality, preparing food and drink, but carers, seniors, management, all continued 'normal service', even as their work intensified.

It is so very uplifting. I am encouraged, time and time again, seeing staff care for their residents. Staff have been and continue to be Heroes of the Home. Whatever is going on for them personally outside, once they walk through the doors of Connors House, they set about making inside life 'normal' for each resident.

I am uplifted, I feel the warmth, the escape from the harsh reality of life in the city outside. But I am sad and concerned about the ongoing effects on staff working at Connors House. Throughout the early days of the pandemic, I kept in touch with what was happening by email and telephone. I cannot forget, when at last I was allowed access last summer, sitting in the enclosed garden, staff came one by one to talk of what they had been through. All were traumatised. Scars will remain. The resilience and loyalty and affection for their residents and for each other has been tested. It has emerged shining like a beacon on a hill. When you talk of love, count Connors House in. Life goes on. Praise God.

*Jill Redman (a manager with Rapport) adds:*

It has been very eventful in our homes and services. It is my faith that keeps us together in prayers for our organisation and my belief that we all have a purpose for our Lord in our everyday lives and why we care so much - a gift from God to be given back by how we live our lives.



## South East Coast Ambulance Service (Medway)

*Ellen Couzens – Associate Chaplain and Trustee*

2021 has been as challenging a year as 2020, albeit in a different way. The pandemic has still been with us, but chaplains have always been allowed to visit ambulance stations throughout the year. I quickly moved back into my regular pattern of visits, and the shared experiences of 2020 gave me a common bond with the crews.

We very sadly had to face a sudden and traumatic staff death in the middle of 2021, but I was honoured to attend my first service funeral, and to form part of the traditional guard of honour. Along with the continuing relentless pace of life for the crews, frequent Covid isolations and all the restrictions, sadness like this made everything more challenging. We have also had changes in staff within the chaplaincy structure, and increased bureaucracy to deal with, which has been difficult for many of the team to fit into already busy schedules, especially as all chaplains are volunteers. Overall, though, the value of chaplaincy has been clearly seen within the service, and I feel goes from strength to strength.



## Other activities

*On-line Training – Susan Randall*

As I am new to KWM, I attended the online Introduction to Workplace Chaplaincy Course in order that I could learn more about chaplaincy in the workplace and meet some prospective chaplains. The interesting and helpful six-week course was offered by Workplace Mission Chaplaincy UK and was co-taught by Dick Johnson and our own Mark Ball.

*Living Wage Week – Mark Ball*

In November, we joined in with Living Wage Foundation's national event to campaign for wider adoption of their recommendations for employee pay. The Real Living Wage is independently calculated based on what employees and their families need to live, and is higher than the statutory minimum wage, now rebranded as the National Living Wage. The campaign has delivered more than £1.5 billion in extra wages to workers since 2001 and lifted over 260,000 people out of in-work poverty. Despite the pandemic shining a spotlight on the importance of low paid workers, over 5.5 million in the UK continue to earn less than the Living Wage.



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