

*Local Ecumenical Partnership and
Registered charity: 1105783*



“Supporting and engaging with people in the workplace”

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

***Kent Workplace Mission is a registered charity,
which is an LEP and Mission Partner of Churches in Kent.***

Introduction

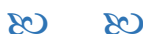
Archdeacon of Canterbury, The Ven Will Adam - Chair of Trustees

It is a privilege to have been elected as the Chair of Kent Workplace Mission, replacing Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones. Andy has now left his former post as Archdeacon of Rochester and left Kent for Yorkshire. We look forward to continuing to work with the different partner churches and their senior teams across Kent as we support workplace ministry and mission in the years to come.

Over the time that I have been involved with KWM I have visited different sites and aspects of workplace chaplaincy in its seemingly endless variety – from the Port of Dover to Bluewater Shopping Centre. What is common to all of them is that chaplains make a difference. What KWM is able to do is to support and co-ordinate the chaplains through investing in some of the necessary background tasks (such as training and supervision) that enable their ministry to flourish.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of our partner churches, charities and other organisations as well as to all the paid and voluntary staff, trustees and supporters who enable all this to happen.

2024 has been a good year for the charity and we look forward to a continued flourishing 2025.



KWM is a community of Christians from different denominations.
who are committed to living out Jesus' discipleship in the workplaces of Kent.

By the end of 2024 Kent Workplace Mission had 63 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 stores in Ashford	▫ Gravesham Borough Council
▫ Ashford Designer Outlet	▫ Medway Council, Chatham
▫ Ashford Town Centre	▫ Penge and Anerley Town Centre
▫ Bexleyheath Town Centre	▫ Port of Dover
▫ Bluewater, Dartford	▫ Royal Victoria Place, Tunbridge Wells
▫ Dungeness B Power Station	▫ Tunbridge Wells Town Centre
▫ Eurotunnel, Folkestone	



Weekly Fellowship

Our online Weekly Fellowship gathers on Wednesdays 10am -11am. We facilitate chaplains and supporters to share in reflective Bible reading and prayer. The access details are uploaded to the website, and everyone is welcome to join any time:

https://www.kentworkplacemission.org/page-weekly_fellowship.html



Co-ordinating Chaplain Report - Penny Culliford

A busy and productive year, with chaplaincies growing in potential and numbers. We have had three commissioning services this year, starting with the Ashford Outlet in February, the Royal Victoria Place, Tunbridge Wells in July and two new chaplains and one returning chaplain at Bluewater in August. There are new High Street chaplaincies in the pipeline for 2025 so watch this space!

We heard from Workplace Chaplaincy UK that they would like us to take our basic chaplaincy training back in-house so Madeleine Shepley, David Slater and I have worked on revising and updating our training. We surveyed existing chaplains to find out what they wish they had known when they first started. We also looked at our previous training and drew inspiration from other chaplaincy training that is available. It is designed to be flexible to deliver online over three evenings or in person in one day. There are plans to run the first course in February.

The website, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) continue to provide information about KWM to our supporters, clients and chaplains as well as the public and allows us to link with and support other organisations.

We held our Media and Communications Training Day which went extremely well, with around 20 in attendance and talks from radio presenters, chaplains and a social media expert. The feedback was very positive, and chaplains felt more confident to engage with the media or simply tell their story. We were blessed with beautiful sunshine on our Quiet Day at St Benedict's, led by Bluewater chaplain, Jan Foreman. It was a wonderful time of refreshing and spending time with God. Another day is being planned for 2025.

It was an amazing opportunity to put together a series on chaplaincy for BBC Radio Kent, Surrey and Sussex, which was broadcast on Sunday mornings. It involved chaplains across the three counties speaking about what they do, and featured a football club chaplain, Beachy Head Chaplains, a YMCA chaplain and David and me speaking about our roles.

Christ the Worker gave me an opportunity to visit, preach at and talk about chaplaincy with a number of churches. 2025's Christ the Worker will have a theme of Sabbath Rest and is available on the KWM website. [Christ the Worker | Kent Workplace Mission](#)

In the coming year Ellen Couzens, our Safeguarding Trustee, Madeleine and I are reviewing our Safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring our training and provision meets the needs of the chaplains and those with whom they are working and incorporates best practice. We have started this by holding a series of meetings with the new Methodist District Safeguarding Officer, Claire Coles, to allow KWM to receive safeguarding support and advice from her.

We are excited to see what this year brings, with new opportunities in the High Streets, growing existing teams and supporting our current chaplains to listen, to encourage and to pray for those they serve.



Here follows reports from some of our chaplains.



Ashford Outlet Centre

Chaplain: Kevin Taylor

Kevin, Claire, Diana, Ruthie

This has been an interesting year for a number of reasons and as Ruthie (one of our team) told me, the three main responses that she has experienced whilst doing chaplaincy visits during this past year, have been “Openness, Curiosity and Gratitude”.

Ruthie’s experience is a reflection of what the rest of us have encountered and I would also add the words ‘pleasantly surprised’, which is something that has been expressed to me a number of times from shoppers, whilst they asked about ‘Ben’ my Labrador’s ‘Chaplaincy’ label on his harness.

For those people (staff and customers) with perhaps a more secular view of the world than ours, there is frequently an encouraging reaction that Christians are essentially showing God’s care for our fellow human beings without attaching ‘conditions’. That is to say, whilst we are always happy to talk about our faith and offer prayers, people are impressed by the fact that we aren’t trying to force our faith on anyone or ‘preach’ at them. Ironically (and wonderfully) these non-pressured conversations often result in some profoundly meaningful outcomes, because our style of approach seems to remove any embarrassment that individuals may have previously felt about asking us ‘difficult’ questions about the things in which we believe.

I don’t think that I am being overly optimistic or even deluded when I say that this approach has nurtured trust and confidence in confidentiality – that is to say that quite a number of the shop staff, whom we *primarily* seek to serve, are showing signs of feeling increasingly comfortable and trusting in talking to us about personal stresses and strains in their lives. This situation has probably evolved because of some wonderfully supportive work that my colleagues on the team have done this year in one or two challenging situations. The result has been that at least some of the shop staff are coming to realise that we won’t let them down and that we don’t simply ‘talk about’ looking after them but actually are willing to do it.

We get excellent support from the McArthur Glen Company management team and have a really good working relationship with the Customer Services Reception staff. We feel well supported by Kent Workplace Mission and the various church communities to which we belong and are extremely grateful to the Trustees and Donors for resourcing our ministry from the practical point of view.

As we all know – resourcing from God, despite our unworthiness, is wonderfully and miraculously always there!

We look forward with faith, hope and gratitude to 2025.



Commissioning of Diane, Claire, Kevin, Ruthie & Sophie



BAE Systems

Chaplain – Rev Mark Ball

It has been a real joy to lead the KWM re-engagement with BAE Systems Rochester, after a long gap following Alec Hollingdale's faithful ministry.

The management team were thoroughly positive and supportive from the very first contact and throughout these first few months. I have toured the site a couple of times and flown from Heathrow to Gatwick - in the flight simulator! (Which left me a quivering wreck!)

Most weeks, I call in to the Hub over lunch, where I can be most effectively visible and accessible. People are getting used to seeing me around now, and I have been blessed to share in some really meaningful conversations with both individuals and teams.

I have even started playing the baritone horn again after attending the annual charity carol service with the recently re-branded Marconi Brass band!



Bexleyheath Town Centre

Chaplain: Marilyn Ormes

Marilyn, John, Jennie, Dorothy, Vicky

BEXLEYHEATH TOWN CENTRE CHAPLAINCY ...

... is changing again! Vicky will be moving away from the area shortly and that will be a huge loss for us. But perhaps it will be an opportunity for her to start a chaplaincy in Paddock Wood? And Dorothy has a friend who is considering joining our team.

Dorothy is now well established in ASDA and John also continues to visit. They support staff as managers change and there is general uncertainty in the retail trade. Our main contact was the ASDA Community Champion who has just retired. So far there is no news of a replacement so we wait to see what implications this may have for the chaplaincy service.

As far as the small shops in Bexleyheath are concerned, we have had a busy and sometimes sad year. One of the premises was taken over by another associated business and it looks as if we will be losing another in the near future as the premises has been sold. This is a wrench not just for the businesses but us too as inevitably attachments are formed.

We have added another shop to the list of places we visit and look forward to establishing relationships with the staff there. And we celebrated with Magnet who received an award for the best employer and Kutchenhaus who were named as the best new business. So onwards and upwards we go!



Birbeck and Anerley

Chaplain: Jeff Hawthorne

I am grateful for how the Lord continues to bless the chaplaincy, including expanding the number of businesses visited and the local community projects that have become a regular feature of the chaplaincy year and help build links between the churches and the community.

On Easter Saturday we held our second Way of the Cross service for the Friends of Betts Park, involving the Mayor of Bromley, local councillors and churches and it was well attended by the community. Carrying a large cross around the park was very moving and we stopped at different locations, such as the preschool, to remember the scriptural Stations of the Cross through prayer and Bible readings. The new KWM Easter cards were very helpful in bringing more blessing to the businesses, particularly with their bright, sunny woodland picture that helped them to be well received by everyone, whatever their beliefs.

Packs of sunflower seeds were also distributed as a symbol of hope and life and one café grew them in their outdoor seating area, bringing a bit of local summer sunshine.

My weekly visits to the local businesses now include the nearby community hall where they hold lunches twice a week and the volunteers appreciate the interest and support from a church representative. I have been increasing the area I cover and having things to offer, such as the Blessing and Christmas cards, has been very helpful for making introductions. The KWM Blessing cards have gone down really well, and some people have found them helpful to look at when they have a particularly difficult customer.

Christmas chaplaincy events have continued to flourish, and we held the third Betts Park blessing service at the beginning of December, again attended by the Mayor and a local councillor. The stormy weather meant we had to meet in nearby Christ Church instead of the park, but this meant most people stayed for refreshments and good connections were made between local churches.

Community carol singing was very well attended and the following week we were again very blessed to be able to take the Bethlehem Peace Light (www.peacelight.org.uk) around the local businesses. The Peace Light candle is an uninterrupted flame originally lit from the Nativity Grotto in Bethlehem and was very well received as a symbol of peace, light, and hope at Christmas, particularly at Beckenham Crematorium where they offered to start supporting our local church foodbank.

This event and the others also provided opportunities to publicise the chaplaincy work and our local businesses and churches on social media. Again, I am very grateful for the immense support from the local churches and the KWM team and I continue to be amazed at how God's Spirit regularly brings about the right conversations at the right time.



Way of the Cross



Community Sunflowers



Betts Park service held inside



The Peace Light from Bethlehem



Community Carol singing



Bluewater

Lead Chaplain Bluewater and Co-ordinating Chaplain – Penny Culliford

Penny, Andrew, Dave, Jan, Kathryn, Mary, Marylene, Mike, Paul, Siân, Valerie

In March, Bluewater celebrated its 25th anniversary. One of the legacy projects is to place a memorial sculpture at the Nature Trail to house the plaques in memory of people who loved the place. We have been working with a wood carver to design the sculpture, which will have a wildlife theme, and it should be in place early in 2025.

This Christmas involved a 'scratch choir' of Bluewater chaplains and their friends, who had the privilege of singing Christmas carols to shoppers in Bluewater and proclaim Christ's birth through song. We also partnered with a local charity to support their Christmas Tree festival.

Bluewater Community Forum continues to provide a place for networking, listening to talks from representatives from local organisations and information sharing.

Chaplain – Siân Thomas

It is a year since I began in service here at Bluewater. As some of you may know I received my commission from Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones last summer.

My highlight for last year was being involved in organising a carol singing session, in the Bluewater shopping centre. I felt so passionately about us bringing Christ back into Christmas amongst the hustle and bustle of the often busy and stressed-out shoppers and staff.

Our lead Chaplain Penny organised a sound engineer and amplification and I invited the Dartford Salvation Army. Other team members invited fellow church members, and we came together mid-December to sing our witness.

We had such good feedback, and it also helped to bond our team of chaplains as we often work at different times.

Thank you, as always, to Kent Workplace Mission for the opportunity you've given me to manifest my love of God and his calling to me to be available to staff at Bluewater as a Chaplain.



Some members of the Bluewater Chaplaincy team carol singing.

Chaplain – Kathryn Swanston

It continues to be a great privilege to be part of the chaplaincy team at Bluewater. We give thanks to God that the team has grown during 2024, with new members joining.

I have continued to make regular visits to John Lewis where I always receive a warm welcome and it is so rewarding to spend time talking to the John Lewis partners and often to customers too.

There have also been opportunities this year to participate in Bluewater's wider focus including attending for the first time a pre-Christmas seasonal briefing hosted by Bluewater management for retailers, to participate in Bluewater's celebration of Purple Tuesday 2024 and to join fellow chaplains and friends for carol singing in the Lower Thames Walk.

Whilst, as chaplains, we often visit Bluewater on different days and at different times it has been wonderful to meet up with others when possible, for a post-visit coffee and thank you to Penny for always being available when called upon for support.

As part of KWM this year I enjoyed the wonderful quiet day led by Jan Foreman at St. Benedict's Centre in June. I also learnt so much, that has been of value, about communicating effectively at the media training course in September, hosted at Bluewater. On both these occasions I had the great pleasure of meeting chaplains from other wings of KWM for the first time with an opportunity to compare notes.

Chaplaincy is certainly not an easy role, especially as the world seems to be changing and fluctuating so much around those whom we visit. However, it continues to amaze me that I seem to learn something new and important about God's care and concern through every encounter and especially so from working alongside my chaplaincy colleagues.



**Port of Dover
Chaplains
(PoD)**

**Eurotunnel
(ET)**

Kent

Emergency

Scheme (KECS)

Dover Port Chaplaincy

Lead Chaplain PoD: Canon David Slater

David, Richard, John, Sean, Malcolm, Billy

2024 was a fairly typical year, offering spiritual support in many ways to the various populations that make up the Port; Harbour Board staff, workers for many other organisations, crews on ferries, cargo ships or cruise liners, passengers on all those boats, RNLI volunteers and people walking on the sea front.

We provide an ecumenical chaplaincy and are often called on when people are worried about being seen to be tied to any particular denomination. As a result, chaplains have been called on to say prayers or lead services from Raising the Flag for Armed Forces Week (Dover has a long military history), remembering the Zeebrugge disaster, Merchant Navy Day, naming a new Harbour Launch (DHB Diligence) to the Remembrance Service in Cruise Terminal One.

We helped facilitate other services such as the commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the arrival of the first Franciscan monks in England with Catholic and Anglican services on the beach before a few of their number re-enacted the walk to Canterbury.

Chaplains, and ordinand trainees on placement, provided chaplaincy services at the Dover Regatta, Kent County Show and Fruit Focus (an industry showcase event at East Malling Research Establishment).

Chaplains were present for the opening of the new RNLI station, the delayed opening when the Duke of Kent was able to attend (election purdah stopped him attending the scheduled event) and the presentation of Coronation Medals to several of the crew. We were also invited to the premiere of a film by Fire-Aid, a charity that drives surplus fire engines to Ukraine through the port.

We started the year with 8 chaplains, but Catherine got a new parish in Thanet and Mike retired (again) to be near family in Sussex. We will be looking for more volunteers in 2025, especially if the new dock area being filled in allows easier access between cruise and cargo, enabling a better service for the seafarers, often at sea for 6 to 9 months.

Some of the chaplains have been publicly recognised for their community work; David received a gift of Maundy Money from the Queen (the King was still isolating) and Billy was awarded the B.E.M. in the Birthday Honours.

The big problem on the horizon is the European Entry/Exit system, delayed from November. Table top exercises suggest it may not go well with long delays for passengers, pressures for staff and difficulties for local people. We had the 'feeding of the 9000' at Christmas 2020; the chaplains may well find themselves filling a similar role in 2025.



Canon David Slater, Lead Chaplain PoD Port Remembrance Service.



Franciscan Mass on the Beach at Dover



Eurotunnel - Le Shuttle Chaplaincy

Lead Chaplain ET, Folkestone: Canon David Slater
David, Richard, Stephen

The chaplaincy at Eurotunnel effectively expanded by 50% when Stephen, a newly ordained local deacon who already worked on the Eurotunnel site, joined David & Richard.

The general situation has been business as usual, but there have been a number of changes with a major staff downsizing. Many of those leaving were our regular contacts and many who remain have been relocated to different offices (without signage) and so tracking people down has sometimes been a challenge.

Being a French majority company we have to be cautious about raising questions of religion with anyone on a French employment contract, but we are allowed hi-vis vests clearly saying 'chaplain' and if we get asked 'what is a chaplain?' then we can say they started the conversation. It had been hoped that carol singing, and charity collections might start again following Covid but the French influence and the effective loss of the Retail Support unit probably means they are gone for good.

David had a few health issues over the summer and so having others close at hand in Folkestone meant he could concentrate on the Dover end of the channel chaplaincies.



Royal Victoria Place, Tunbridge Wells

Chaplains – Zoe Smith & Tony Fitzpatrick

Zoe, Tony, Caz, Leo, Rob, Hannah

For the chaplaincy team in Tunbridge Wells, 2024 has been one of challenge, commissioning and growth.

We ended 2023 feeling a little anxious about how things were going to be as we had become a team of two after staying goodbye to two chaplains earlier in the year. God is amazing though, because soon into the New Year, we had two more people keen and ready to join us.

Throughout the months that followed God blessed us with another person interested in joining the team. In classic 'God style' He was blessing us beyond what we had imagined! What was even more exciting was that we moved beyond Royal Victoria Place shopping centre and into the High Street.

In July after much anticipation and planning the 5 of us were finally commissioned as retail chaplains - this was a truly blessed time of worship, testimony and confirmation that this was where God wanted us to be.

Our year finished with a sixth person beginning their training and shadowing with us, and we're excited to see them join our team soon.

Throughout this year we faced difficulties where we've had new managers come into position and being asked not to visit the stores, but we've been blessed beyond all measure as we've served and walked alongside those working in the places we go. We've celebrated with them, helped hold their pain, talked about the mundane, and prayed for and been blessed to be invited to share our experiences of God and faith.

This year has shown us that you never know what will happen next, but it's also taught us that we can continue to trust God in everything and that He will guide us on.



Commissioning of (from left to right) Leo Harvey, Rev Rob Byrne, Rev Caz Mills, Captain Zoe Smith and Tony Fitzpatrick with The Ven Andy Wooding Jones and Penny Culliford.





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