

Chaplaincy Connect organized by The Free Churches Group

In February I attended a networking meeting called Chaplaincy Connect. There were chaplains from all kinds of settings and contexts and from all over the country. The day was organised by The Free Churches Group. Their website describes them as “an ecumenical association of Free Church denominations and Church groups who are engaged in public ministry, enabling member organisations to meet their calling in the public square by providing national chaplaincy support in the fields of healthcare and prisons, and providing support and resources to equip them in their engagement with education in schools, colleges and universities.”

It was an extremely useful and very chaplaincy-focused day, with the opportunity to learn from, and informally network with attendees from across the country.

The first speaker was the **Reverend Canon Mark Birch** who spoke to us about his chaplaincy journey. He had previously been chaplain at the Hospital of St Cross and at Treloar College in Alton and at a hospice for children in Oxford. He is associated with Westminster Abbey and was involved in the planning for Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in 2022. His current role is as Canon Rector of Westminster Abbey and **Speaker's Chaplain in the House of Commons**. He spoke about the interface of faith and politics and the difficult line he walks in his chaplaincy role.



Later we had Pecha Kucha presentations (short, timed visual presentations) from **Anna Chaplaincy** from Julia Burton Jones who is married to Simon, Bishop of Tonbridge. She spoke about how the need was identified for a specific ministry to older people, particularly those in care homes and those with dementia. What started as a small movement is now nationwide providing training, resources and support.

Reverend Chris Upton from **Waterways Chaplaincy** described chaplains as “*embedded guests*” – an integral part of the organisation or community, invited rather than employed. He spoke about the unique opportunities of the organisation which provides chaplaincy to boaters and to all who live, work or just enjoy the inland canals and waterways in England and Wales. Their volunteers regularly visit the waterways offering a listening ear or practical help to those they meet.

We also heard from a doctor who talked about **chaplaincy in his surgery** being offered to patients as part of social prescribing. This service runs alongside what is provided through normal GP services.

After that, we had a presentation on **impact assessment** (measurability of outcomes and impact for chaplaincy, a notoriously difficult thing to measure). This was based in the further education sector, but the challenges and suggestions were applicable across chaplaincy in different sectors.

There was also time to network, and I gave out several business cards and recommended our website to the man who said, “wouldn't it be good if there was a national day to think about chaplaincy”. I spoke to him about the role of chaplaincy in the workplace and mentioned **Christ the Worker**. It would be good to have opportunities to build a deeper relationship between KWM and The Free Churches Group.

Penny Culliford (KWM Coordinating Chaplain)

A call to ALMS – could you be ready to help?

What do the following have in common...?

An aircraft crash at Heathrow, the Southall rail crash, the Grenfell fire, fire in the roof space of a row of houses in Canterbury, a fire on a ferry in Dover, 9000 cars trapped wanting to cross the channel.

They all needed chaplains, but not regular workplace ones, nor just any local clergy. The blue light services don't want people just turning up to help 'spontaneously', they just take the front-line responders away from their key work. National standards are to keep 'helpers' away, forcibly if necessary.

For Christians to be able to help in situations like these they need to be recognisable and have some basic understanding of how the Emergency Response world works. Get that wrong and it reflects badly on the whole Church as 'incompetent meddlers', yet these are situations where there is a great need for spiritual and pastoral support – even if they don't feature on civil service tick-lists.



Kent Emergency Chaplains Scheme (KECS) tries to pre-empt this by giving chaplains across the county some basic training into what might be needed if things go wrong in their area. Kent has 3 major rail routes to London, 4 motorways, large areas liable to flooding, cross-channel ferry and rail links; and we sit under the main air-routes from London to Europe – so what could possibly go wrong here? People in the small town of Lockerbie thought that it couldn't happen there.

KECS is organised by KWM as we are the only ecumenical body covering most denominations across the whole of Kent (especially as Anglicans split Rochester and Canterbury) – and the county-based emergency services just want one number to call, leaving us to work out which churches/chaplains are nearest. Many, though not all, of the KECS chaplains are already, or have been, chaplains in workplaces or with organisations such as cadet forces.

The Covid years have given a gap in recruitment and training, and also our links with officers in the District and County Councils but it is hoped to restart training this year. It is not difficult as most of the real pastoral skills are things already known from other chaplaincy/ministry roles – but it is important to know a bit of the jargon and terminology (ie the KRF from the KRT or a FFRC from an SRC – civil servants love their acronyms even more than the Church).

We are particularly short of people in the north & west of the county.

The chances of actually being called upon are very small, but if the unthinkable does happen in your area you need to have got the right ID to be able to help.

If you think you might be interested do get in contact with Penny or myself, or just email:

david@kentworkplacemission.org or KECS2019@gmail.com

Canon David Slater (KWM Charity Secretary)

Christ the Worker

Sunday 4th May 2025

✠
bless you

blessings be at work for you
as you are at work for us
kentworkplacemission.org



On the Seventh Day...

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:28-29

Christ the Worker day, Sunday 4th May 2025, is almost upon us with a challenge this year to sit back and contemplate the theme of ‘rest’. When should I rest? How often? What does rest look like? Am I really resting?

Jesus challenged the laws and traditions of Sabbath rest, and in contrast with the practices at the time, showed how he fulfilled God's commandment, so we can find our rest in him.

There is a range of new resources, Bible readings, song ideas, and links to contemporary articles and accounts that will take the strain out of planning church services, small group sessions or personal study on the theme of rest.

Follow this link on our website: [Resources for Christ the Worker](#)

To order some of the Blessing cards above follow this link: [Blessing cards](#)

Weekly Fellowship

Wednesdays, 10.00am-11.00am on Zoom

We really look forward to you joining us some time to share with us in an engaging hour of reflective Bible study and supportive prayer for the work of KWM. For joining details follow this link on our website: [Weekly Fellowship | Kent Workplace Mission](#)

or email: admin@kentworkplacemission.org

BAE Systems Rochester – Reviving chaplaincy.

BAE SYSTEMS



There has been KWM chaplaincy engagement at BAE Systems Rochester over many years. When the previous chaplain Alec Hollingdale retired from the role, it proved challenging to find someone new to take it on. Several possibilities were explored over several years, but none quite fitted, and the chaplaincy provision was left largely under resourced, other than the offer of emergency crisis support.

In 2022 my own role changed, and I started working three days a week as Lead Retail Chaplain with Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy and three days a week as Associate Priest with the Rochester and Borstal Church of England Parishes. Those parishes are informally clustered with St Justus, Rochester – the parish in which the BAE Systems site is located. Discussions were had between KWM, the parishes, and BAE Systems, who had remained very keen to have a chaplain appointed throughout the vacancy period. And so it was that just over a year ago now, I was appointed to the role.

Security clearance and induction were rigorous and positive processes. It meant engaging with a wide range of management personnel, which gave a real insight into the business's openness and commitment to working with KWM. It was agreed for me to go in one lunchtime a week to start with, and to base myself in 'The Hub' - a huge café area where many of the 1,600 staff have their lunch. It is a good place to be seen to be present and there is an area of quieter seating at the back of the room where it is easier to have one-to-one conversations.

One person going in one hour a week is, of course, not the quickest way to connect with people and build meaningful relationships, but it is a start. I have been able to establish a handful of key connections who are helping spread the word and encouraging engagement. These include the reception team, 'The Hub' catering team, and the Employee Resource Group leads, as well as the onsite Occupational Therapists and production and HR managers. There have been some really encouraging and appreciative conversations, and some particularly valuable opportunities to come alongside employees affected by the deaths of colleagues and loved ones.

The plan is to build up a small team of other chaplains to support KWM's ministry here at BAE Systems.

If you might be interested in finding out more about it, please get in touch with me here: mark@kentworkplacemission.org. And please do pray for God's blessing on all those working on the site and on our chaplaincy engagement with them.



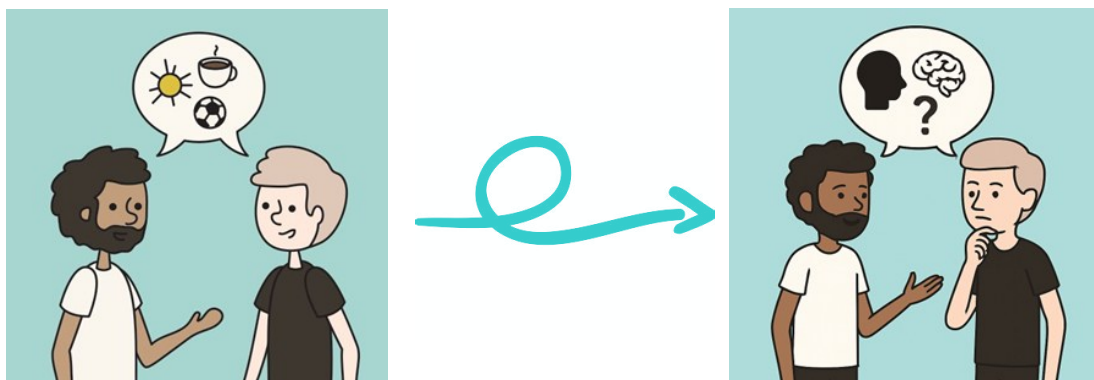
Rev Mark Ball (KWM chaplain)

Small Talk leads to Big Conversations

I find it hard to believe that it is almost twenty-eight years since I was cast out from theological college and stationed to my first circuit appointment. But the diary (and grey hair) tells me it is so. As an introvert, one of the most challenging aspects of ministry – and one of its most important – is **pastoral work**. **This is usually made up of conversations**, lots of conversations. For we introverts that can be really tiring, and yet most vital to get to grips with. It would be much easier to wash the plates in the church kitchen than to ‘work the room’ talking to people. But **‘working the room’ is a vital part of relationship building**. And, over the last twenty-eight years I have discovered the ability to talk (or more usefully *listen*) to as many subjects as there are subjects to talk about – some of which I might know something about, and most I have to sagely nod and learn. Much of the pastoral task is what we might call small talk. It often isn’t profound at all!

I was speaking to a friend recently who is a chaplain in HM armed forces. We talked about the nature of chaplaincy. He has served in a very diverse range of chaplaincy-focused ministries. His profound comment was this: **small talk leads to big conversations**.

He recognised that many – perhaps most – of his conversations we might call small talk. But rather than writing small talk off as being of little or no importance – as if all ministerial conversations should be about highfalutin’ theology – it is such conversations about everyday things - family and friends, sport and hobbies, talking about work, the world around us, what you are doing that evening or at the weekend, where you’d like to go on holiday, talking proudly about your children – all these everyday things which build relationships. We get to know each other through small talk.



And the small talk matters. Why? Because **small talk leads to big conversations** when it needs to. In other words, all that seemingly unimportant chit-chat can open the door, so that when someone needs to speak about something of great importance to them, they know you will listen, respect them, be alongside them *because you already have been* in every conversation you have had with them.

Small talk leads to big conversations could be a really good definition of chaplaincy. Building relationships so that when big things happen, we are there and known and trusted – maybe even to talk about God. But actually, I’ve found it is simply a good definition of both ministry in particular, and relationship building in general.

Not all our conversations will seem to be about God. Yet God is there in the mix of the everyday. And yet just perhaps, through the small talk, big conversations can happen – and we become aware that, as we often say in worship, **‘The Lord is here. God’s Spirit is with us.’**

Rev Dr David Hinchliffe (KWM Trustee)

Annual General Meeting 2025



Registered Charity No. 1105783

All are invited to our

Annual General Meeting

**To be held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 19:30
At Larkfield and East Malling Methodist Church,
New Hythe Lane, Larkfield ME20 6PN**

If you would like to attend, please let us know so that we can provide refreshments.

Email Madeleine at admin@kentworkplacemission.org



Photo by Jeff Hawthorne (KWM Chaplain)

May God bless
you with love,
joy and hope
this Easter



From extreme lows of betrayal and death to extreme highs of triumph and joy.

The period we know as **Holy Week and Easter** takes us back to the story of the events in the life and ministry of Jesus from Palm Sunday and his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, through his arrest, trial and crucifixion, to his resurrection on Easter Day.



The week brings with it the extreme highs of triumph and joy and the extreme lows of betrayal, pain, despair and death. One of the reasons why there are so many church services over the course of the week is that a story that is so intense and where virtually every day brings a different set of storylines and emotions cannot be told just by attending church on a Sunday. To go to church on Palm Sunday and on Easter Day, though wonderful, takes you from 'Hosanna' to 'Alleluia' without passing through 'Crucify him!' and 'he bowed his head and gave up his spirit'.

For many people, though, this is the reality, and it is possible to know and commemorate the story of Holy Week at home, with family, in reading and in prayer.

Kent Workplace Mission has at its heart the reality of work and working life. In a society where church-going has increasingly become a leisure option in competition with many others the connection of church and work is a tricky one. **The provision of leisure for some, demands work for others.** At times, including Easter time, when there are bank holidays and special weekends the leisure that some of us will enjoy will require others of us to work to make it happen. And for some of us, ministry in church is work – whether voluntary or stipendiary, full time or part time. But at Easter especially, it is work that comes with joy and seeks to spread joy.

Jesus Christ knew the realities of work but also knew the importance of time out and rest. For those who have the opportunity to take rest this is important. But let us always remember the importance of work that is necessary for life to go on and for people to thrive. This Easter, if we have some time off, **let's pray for the people who work** to make this happen. And if we are working **let's pray for the people who are having time off** – that they might return to their work fulfilled and refreshed.



A very blessed Holy Week and a joyful Easter to you.

The Ven Will Adam (KWM Chair)

Trustees and Office Holders

KWM is a Local Ecumenical Partnership being a mission partner of Churches Together in Kent, and so has trustees from the partner denominations, as well as trustees representing the membership. Trustees are appointed, and officers elected, annually.

Denominational Trustees

Anglican Rochester Diocese

Canon Ellen Couzens and *one vacancy*

Anglican Canterbury Diocese

Ven William Adam and *one vacancy*

South East Baptist Association

two vacancies

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South East Division Salvation Army

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