

Work Place Chaplaincy Scotland - Summer Newsletter 2018

Meet Central Volunteer Chaplain, Brian Porteous



When I was training initially as a Reader in the Church of Scotland (I was ordained as an Ordained Local Minister a few weeks ago) I was on a placement in Holy Trinity Church in St. Andrews and with the then minister Rory Macleod and someone from WPCS (Allan Webster I think) we went to the St Andrews bus garage. It struck me then that work place chaplaincy could be an excellent part of my ministry as a reader (and now as an OLM). When I saw details of an information day in Dundee, I registered and the rest is history!

I have worked in sport and recreation most of my career – Scottish Sports Council (where I rose to the giddy heights of Director of Operations), Glasgow City Council where I was Depute Director of Parks and Recreation and then of Cultural and Leisure Services. Once Glasgow decided they didn't need depute directors, I became a strategic management consultant.

I guess my most significant clients been the Irish Rugby Football Union for whom I supported their strategic and professional game planning for some 12 years. On the voluntary side, my main sport is orienteering and I am an Honorary Life President of the International Orienteering Federation having been the IOF President from 2012 to 2016 – I decided to retire when someone called me the Sepp Blatter of orienteering.

For the past few years I have been chaplain to the retained fire station and Royal Mail Delivery Office in Cupar – an interesting contrast – I meet the firefighters after training on a Tuesday evening at 8.45pm and the posties at 7am! Now that I am assistant minister at Torbain Church in Kirkcaldy, I am also taking on the role of chaplain to the Fife Retail Park which is 200m from our church.

As a fire service chaplain I've had the opportunity to visit the Fire and Rescue Service HQ and Training Centre at Cambuslang on two occasions – most recently on the Friday before my second son Stephen started his 14 week training there as a full time fire fighter.

Let's be honest, folk are no longer coming in their droves to our churches. So, if we are serious about ministry, we have to get out there rather than wait for people to come to our churches. Jesus, in His ministry, went to where people lived and worked and met their real needs. I believe we are called as Christians to follow in His footsteps and WPCS gives us a unique opportunity in this complex modern world to do just that.

Final comment – as someone who has been going through ministry training in the Church of Scotland, I have found all the WPCS training both complementary and incredibly relevant. CofS training simply does not touch on many of the areas covered by WPCS which are so vital to meeting the real pastoral needs of those in workplaces and congregations.

Meet West Volunteer Chaplain, Linda Stefani



When I retired I was looking for some voluntary work which would interest me and perhaps use some of my life experiences to support others. I had done some chaplaincy while I was completing a degree in Theology at the ICC. I had to find a placement for one of the modules, and I knew that if I offered my services to a church I would probably be asked to assist with young people. Now, I have nothing against young people .. but having taught for five years when I was younger, I had realised that my gift did not lie in coping with other peoples' children in vast quantities! I decided hospital chaplaincy may be the answer. This resulted in me working in the chaplaincy at Ailsa hospital in Ayr, which is a hospital for the mentally ill. I was a bit unsure to start with but ended up loving it. A sixteen week placement became an eight year voluntary job.

A friend at church invited me to an information session about workplace chaplaincy and I decided to explore it further. I could totally understand the benefits of the service, as I had spent my whole working life having to keep working while very distracting things were happening in my private life – divorce, bereavements, my employer's company going into liquidation, serious illness etc.

There are no support services for working people, they just have to get on with it! I thought I would be well placed to get alongside people in the workplace. While I would never dream of giving advice, I felt I could offer empathy and support .. so I became a workplace chaplain.

I trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Drama in Glasgow. Then I completed teacher training at Jordanhill. I taught for 5 years before having my 2 sons. I had no notion to go back to teaching, so after a very brief spell as an advertising sales person with the Ayrshire Post, I got a job running a pilot of the Youth Training Scheme. I had found my niche! The next 25 years were spent persuading employers to take on trainees, organising the training, interviewing school leavers etc, and I loved it! I ended up with my own company which was successful for 18 years. I sold it around 2 years ago .. and here I am! I also volunteer with charities that help homeless people, alcoholics, drug addicts and ex-offenders. I love doing this too.

I began chaplaincy with WPCS in Ayr High Street, shadowing a colleague. The retail sector is not good in Ayr - many zero hours and short term contracts which meant hardly seeing the same people twice. It was a bit like groundhog day .. we were always re-introducing ourselves! I would admit to feeling slightly discouraged.

Luckily a factory in Ayrshire which had a workplace Chaplain became available and I was asked if I would like to be their new Chaplain. My immediate answer was yes please! I had worked in lots of factories during my career and had always enjoyed the journey from being a new visitor to becoming 'in with the bricks'. Happily that is exactly what has happened. I love the fact that from the moment I arrive at the gatehouse I meet people I know.

Recently some of the Chaplains have been visiting Fire Stations which I have found really interesting and I hope I'll be invited to help with that ministry.

I would encourage others to consider volunteering by assuring them that Chaplaincy is not about trying to convert people to Christianity. I think is about getting to know people and making it clear that if they want to talk, we are there. If you enjoy chatting to people, and more importantly, listening to people, then you can do it.

Someone asked me yesterday, when talking about Workplace Chaplaincy, "but how do you bring The Lord into it?" My answer was, "I don't .. I'm simply trying to be His hands and feet on earth .."

Meet North Volunteer Chaplain, Georgie Middleton



During my training to be a lay reader with the Scottish Episcopal Church, chaplaincy in any form sounded really appealing. My supervisor looked around for where I might shadow, discovered WPCS in his research, and set up a 4 month placement for me to learn from Ron Flett, Aberdeen City Chaplain. It worked very well. Ron was extremely welcoming, took time to explain how chaplaincy is pastoral care and listening, but is that presence of bringing Christ into the workplace; not asking anything from anyone but offering companionship in the journey.

Learning how Ron developed and made new relationships taught me a lot and I greatly valued the prayer support we would share after trips - that made it particularly meaningful - that we could hand over to God what had been disclosed during our meetings with people. I also learnt from Ron the fine balance between respecting people's beliefs, and showing that we cared - I could see how good it was, it really was something that impacted people's lives, they enjoyed Ron's visits and what chaplaincy meant for them.

My husband is a retired diplomat, so having lived in many different places in the world meant that I loved meeting new people and forming connections wherever those would lead. Aberdeen has people from all over the world coming to live and work, they see it as a place to invest their lives and I know what that's like .. I like to try and support people who are working to contribute to Aberdeen.

I cover Union Street in the centre of the City which includes pubs, restaurants, high street shops, small businesses (eg Specsavers and recruitment offices), leasing agencies, post office, some banks but not all, charity shops, and betting shops! It is interesting that people stay long term in the betting shops which enables the chaplain to journey through the ups and downs of life with them; they seem very open to spending time in conversations and opening up.

The highlights of chaplaincy are when you realise you've really made a connection, when you know that there is mutual trust, you can sense that your relationship is stronger and that you are trusted. People then

will share their good news of family celebrations – birth, weddings, sharing photos, new jobs after redundancies – and this is so rewarding.

It is such an important privilege to reflect WPCS's values, and the sense of belonging to a team of chaplains, the support from other chaplains, the Regional Organiser and the whole organisation – sharing common goal and working together – is what enables that.

Any type of person, however you think of yourself (extrovert/introvert), everybody has something to offer in the workplace. Every Christian has the love for their neighbour that makes for chaplaincy and I really would encourage others to consider volunteer chaplaincy. When people come back from their holidays and see that you're still there, they really do appreciate that you're not 'here today, gone tomorrow' – you are in fact living the chaplaincy role authentically.



**WORK PLACE
CHAPLAINCY
Scotland**

Introduction and Training Day

Work Place Chaplaincy Scotland aims to meet people where they are - in the setting of their daily working lives. A chaplain's main purpose is Christian service, simply because people matter irrespective of their status or position. A chaplain is available to ALL staff.

Could you be involved in this rapidly expanding area of Christian service?
For those interested, or involved in workplace chaplaincy:

**Wednesday 22nd August, Palmerston Place Church,
10 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh EH12 5AA**

Introduction Session - 9.30am to 12.30pm
Organisational Dynamics – 1.00pm to 4.00pm

The day will include:

- The role and structure of **Work Place Chaplaincy Scotland**
- What is workplace chaplaincy?
- An introduction to further training
- How chaplains operate within organisations

to book a place please phone or email Cat Parkinson (details below)

Listening & Caring in Confidence
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