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# SOUTHERN SYNOD CHURCH & SOCIETY

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## Chaplaincy

During my own ministries I have had opportunity to be involved in chaplaincies at a car plant, a school for children with life-limiting illnesses, a care home, an academy secondary school, a local authority headquarters and a building site. Others have been involved with uniformed organisations, hospitals, the emergency services, hospices and retail parks. In this issue of the Southern Synod Church and Society newsletter we



explore what they have in common and consider how all people of faith might get involved and why it could prove to be the best form of mission and outreach.

The chaplain is a listening ear to people of all faiths and none at all, able to act as a conscience to the organisation, and ready to share a prophetic word of encouragement and hope. The chaplain is independent of workplace structures and powers, confidential within legal constraints, neutral, non-condemning and non-judgemental.

The variety of conversations are vast and the chaplain needs to be a good communicator, able to respond to difference, comfortable at making 'first moves' and adaptable. The task is open to clergy and non-clergy alike and is often done on a part time but regular basis.



Some chaplaincies are remunerated with a fee or honorarium but many are gifted to the organisation as a sign of Christian philanthropy. Chaplaincy can not be viewed as an evangelistic activity as there will be strict rules about preaching and proselytism, but it is an expression of Jesus' example and the church reaching out into the community. Another value of chaplaincy is the opportunity to bring the community's story into the worshipping life of the congregation. The tensions found in the workplace are often the same concerns found in the church.

Many of the chaplaincies that I have been involved with start as a conversation with a senior member of the leadership team either instigated by me or them that seeks to explore how chaplaincy can add value to the workplace. It is amazing how that conversation uncovers a rich vein of christianity that already exists and how many in the organisation have kept their belief and faith private in case it impacts on their reputation.



It begs the question about members in our own congregations and their confidence to let their colleagues know about their faith. Do we need to offer folk help in speaking about their faith and encouragement to discuss how that influences their work and relationships with others? There is a place for discipleship to help people live out their faith in the workplace without it becoming a problem to them or others.

Would people like to discuss these matters?

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