

Marketplace Chaplains Europe



by Jonathan Martin

Jonathan outlines the philosophy and success of a workplace chaplaincy organisation that is funded by its clients and yet valued by employers for its independence.

With well over 90% of the population not belonging to a Christian church, how can Christians serve them? One way is through the workplace.

Most people still have a family member who goes to work. It may be a grandson or a spouse, but someone they know earns money through work. Marketplace Chaplains Europe provides Christian chaplains to the workplaces of Europe. They pay us to provide them with a Christian care programme. We appoint Christian chaplains to serve them, their families, their customers, and suppliers.

In recruiting staff we look for mature Christians who have good doctrinal understanding, experience of workplaces, and a desire to serve. These staff are our employees. We recruit and pay chaplains who relish a 3 a.m. phone call. When the phone rings they rejoice because the call means an opportunity for service. In training our chaplain teams we seek to encourage those we recruit to model their service on Jesus

Christ. We also help them hone their visiting skills so that they can undertake a workplace visit in no longer than two minutes.

Two minutes is a long time in a professional work environment. A smile and a greeting is often enough to begin to form a relationship. Having the faith to wait on God and simply move on is vitally important. The heartbeat of our service is the workplace visit. We always appoint a team that includes a man and a woman. Where there are significant numbers of speakers of a language that is not English, we pray for and recruit a team member who speaks that language fluently. As Jesus spoke to people with stories they understood, so we sense it is vital to appoint chaplain teams who can with excellence communicate with those we serve .

We find that in the first year 50-70% of employees and their families respond positively to the chaplaincy service by asking to see members of the team after ►►



Is it right to levy a charge for ministry?

▶▶ work, or in a break. They like to talk to someone whom they know cares. Job insecurity is sometimes a fear. More often than not it's concern over an aging parent, worry about illness or anxiety about an adolescent that leads people to ring or email our chaplains. Many people are looking to make sense of their lives, giving chaplains an opportunity to tell the story of God's gift of salvation to humankind.

Having that eternal perspective is important. Knowing that conversion, and the grace to serve, is God's work, we pray that we commend ourselves by who we are. We know that business leaders and HR Managers take us on because they care about their people. They recognise that you cannot say 'leave your problems at home'. They also see tangible benefits from chaplain care teams. Staff absenteeism reduces, staff turnover decreases, employee morale and team work both improve. We are not surprised, for all people are created in the likeness of God, and can only find hope through the grace of God. For some in leadership this is their motivation in contracting with us to serve their people.

In meeting with representatives of like-minded organisations in the UK a number of questions often emerge. Is it right to levy a charge for ministry? In providing accountability to our clients is confidentiality compromised? Does an emphasis on pastoral ministry mean that prophetic challenge is not addressed?

Is it right to levy a charge for ministry?

Marketplace charges a client for providing an additional layer of care to their staff, more than can normally be provided by good managers or an outstanding Human Resources department. Our experience is that when a staff member is impacted by a personal issue such as bereavement or debt, there is a point when the company has to focus on operational concerns rather than the need of the individual. A Marketplace employee care team is resourced to spend more time with the staff member or their family. The benefits are clear. The individual is given an extended opportunity to address his or her concerns. Bereavement, or loss of possessions due to debt, are not neat and tidy issues from which individuals conveniently recover. Fail to attend to the underlying issues and the health of a staff member, and he or she is sometimes at risk of operating below their capacity. The business case for a good quality employee care service is obvious. Both individuals and the organisation and society benefit. The business is making a commercial decision to invest in staff and their business. They are paying for a service, which Christians choose to describe as a ministry. This is no different to a Christian staff member called to serve as a shop worker, managing director, or farm labourer - all of whom rightly charge an employer for work done, which is remunerated through the payroll.

Confidentiality

In return for the charge levied, clients expect to see transparent reporting. All chaplains keep a full and very detailed account of their activity, while operating within similar confidentiality agreements as counselors. In their reporting documentation chaplains have a note section which can only be accessed by them and cannot be seen by the management of Marketplace Chaplains Europe. To our clients we report only trends, and accompany our regular reviews with human interest stories on which we have received permission to report. We will also encourage staff and their families to write to the management of



▶▶ our clients when they want to express thanks or criticism of the programme. These accountability techniques do meet the expectations of our clients, who express appreciation of our reports, which form the basis of a discussion about our service. Management level reporting is sometimes accompanied by open forums at which chaplain teams are complimented as well as challenged about how we go about our work. With a smaller client there is the possibility that trends (e.g. concern about organisational change, or elderly relatives) might be tracked back to individuals. Rather than include such information we therefore exclude it. Our experience is that clients understand the need for confidentiality, are committed to their staff, and prefer us to veer on the side of caution. They really do understand that staff and families who are able to attend to the personal and professional issues they face are more likely to perform better in the workplace.

Prophetic challenge

That does not mean that clients always run excellent workplaces all of the time. They are attending to a variety of challenges which can mean that individuals are

impacted by organisational, societal, or personal change in a way that even the best of managers might not have anticipated. Organisations too can become stressed. Having an independent chaplain care team serving the company with chaplains who are not employees can provide observations about the organisation which can lead to positive change. Sometimes that will emerge from a report produced by Marketplace, sometimes through a chaplain care team ensuring the staff effectively utilise company grievance procedures. The call to challenge prophetically is heard more easily when commitment to staff and organisation has become apparent over a period of time.

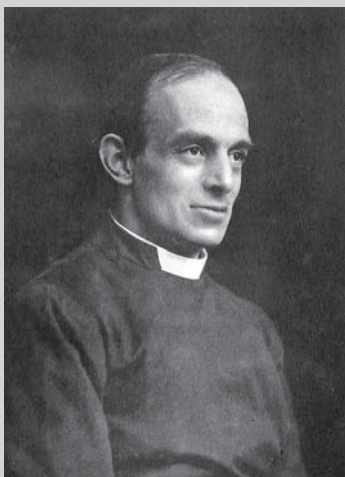
Marketplace believes that the way of operating it has chosen is sustainable, is an effective means of Christian witness, and is enjoying beginning to work alongside other models of workplace chaplaincy in Europe. Marketplace Chaplains Europe is a company limited by guarantee, and a registered charity. We are proactively looking to serve businesses and organisations across the United Kingdom and into Europe. We value your prayer as we seek Godly opportunities. ■

Jonathan Martin is General Director of Marketplace Chaplains Europe, and Officiating Chaplain, Royal Navy. He was Deputy Manager of the Daily Bread Co-operative, and a Director of The Accountancy Co-operative, Lytchett Minster, a curate in Rossmore, then Executive Director of RSR, a Chaplain to the Borough of Poole and is a Non-residentiary Canon of Salisbury Cathedral.

email:
jonathanmartin
@mchap.co.uk

website:
www.mchap.co.uk

Tel: 01202 745323



We cannot live on unearned bread. We must work. We must work with and for God and our fellow workers, and by working with and for them, learn to love them. It is by work that we must learn to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That is to say by the eternal principles of justice, honesty, mercy, and mutual love. We must consciously co-operate with God and with our fellow workers in the building of the Kingdom, and in the great school of voluntary co-operative service, must learn to value the kingdom more highly than ourselves. To give people bread without calling upon them to earn it, is to rot them both body and soul.

Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy, *The New Man in Christ*, Hodder & Stoughton 1932, p. 195 (Altd.)