

# Chaplaincy in the Global Market Place

by *Fiona Stewart-Darling*

**Fiona shows how she tackled building a chaplaincy to 60,000 people, and became accepted by the business community. She faces up to the challenges of ministering to the rich, the relationships with local churches and the ultimate question of the power of money.**



## The first days

In June 2004 I arrived at Canary Wharf to begin the task of setting up a chaplaincy to the business community. It was a daunting prospect, with a working population of 60,000 people on a 97-acre estate (as it was then), but at least I already knew two of them from my interview three months earlier. My appointment was a joint venture by the Diocese of London and the managers of the estate, the Canary Wharf Group (CWG); the Diocese providing the funding for the first three years with CWG providing office accommodation and IT support. My brief was a pioneering role to establish corporate and personal relationships across the Docklands with particular emphasis on Canary Wharf and engage with spiritual, social and ethical issues which arise in the complex area of global finance.

On my first day in post I arrived to claim my office and discovered that one of the two people I had met during my interview, the one who worked for CWG, had in the meantime left. Fortunately CWG were still expecting me and had set aside an office, next to a woman who would prove to be invaluable over the next few years by introducing me to several business networks.

Introductions and networks were – and still are – essential to my work. During my first week I met key personnel from the Canary Wharf Group. They introduced me to a new mode of transport: to get my bearings, I was driven around the estate in a golf buggy. A banker got in touch with me ‘out of the blue’ to talk about ordination: his brother, a hospital chaplain, had spotted my appointment in the diocesan news. On my third day I was walking past the Museum of London in Docklands when the duty manager stopped me to invite me to lead a Service of Remembrance on the next Armistice Day.

My formal induction included a presentation from Security. Anyone who has visited Canary Wharf by car will be familiar with the barriers at the entrance and the vehicle checks, but that’s only a part of their extensive operation. One of my first Sundays in Tower Hamlets I slipped into a pew in a local church and the man behind tapped me on the shoulder and quietly told me he knew who I was and watched me every day. To my great relief he quickly added that he worked in the main security control room at Canary Wharf as part of a large team monitoring all the CCTV. I feel glad to be working in one of the safest places in Britain but not so sure about people knowing if I roll up late to work some mornings. I discovered that the strict security extends to each and every building: there would be no wandering into any offices uninvited.



## ▶▶ Introductions and networks

The majority of businesses based at Canary Wharf are multinational corporations, including the world's three largest financial institutions: Citigroup, HSBC, and Bank of America. There's also Clifford Chance, the largest law firm in the world, and BP, the UK's largest company. Canary Wharf is also home to the Financial Services Authority and the global headquarters of Barclays Bank and Thomson-Reuters news agency, and the European headquarters of Credit Suisse, Morgan Stanley, State Street, Bank of New York, KPMG, Moodys, and McGraw Hill. Other companies in the process of, or considering moving onto the estate, include Fitch Rating and J. P. Morgan.

Unsurprisingly, by week two I still only knew a handful of people. The job felt more and more impossible, but from experience I believe that the key to any chaplaincy is by beginning to make personal relationships and that's what I was determined to do. So I emailed the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Stepney, my friends and family asking for names and introductions to anyone they knew who worked in Canary Wharf. I also met local clergy and preached in their churches and sought out connections there too. Gradually the invitations into those shiny glass towers came.



*Canary Wharf's shiny glass towers*

Proper introductions are key to gaining face-to-face time with new people. After that, it's up to me to convince them to meet with me

again. Patience and persistence are essential qualities in this type of business chaplaincy. Everyone is extremely busy. Even when people have a genuine willingness to meet me, I am not usually at the top of their 'to do' list. Sometimes a meeting may be postponed four or five times in as many months – especially during a global economic crisis.

## Social geography

To discover how a chaplaincy might relate to this unique environment, it was important to gain an initial understanding of the social geography of the whole area of Canary Wharf, the dynamics of its history and cultures, and the nature of economic activity within it. Much of my work in the early years involved listening and observing and reflecting with others. Upon this foundation of basic factual knowledge and familiarity, I began the long process of building relationships and gaining the trust of individuals and companies. As I began to immerse myself in the place, I was also concerned not to lose a healthy critical awareness.

Asking questions and listening carefully to the responses was crucial to understanding the business community. I had assumed that my initial contact with the banks and law firms would be through Human Resources departments as this had been my former way of working as a university chaplain. In Canary Wharf it wasn't so straightforward. By a series of referrals I eventually found myself having coffee with the Head of Diversity in one of the large banks. We began to meet regularly and I learnt about the diversity issues and challenges within the bank and we explored together what I might offer as the chaplain. She then referred me to a colleague in another bank, where I could use my new found knowledge to ask intelligent questions and learn even more. Then she in turn introduced me to a colleague in another bank and so the process continued. I started to understand that each company has its own distinctive work culture, but all operate according to the same diversity and equality laws, concerning gender, age, ▶▶

▶▶ ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and religion, and chaplaincy must work within the scope afforded by these policies. As chaplains we are invited into companies as a guest and whilst much around the area of diversity is about equality which is at the heart of faith as Christians, different companies have differing policies of how this is worked out in practice and so it is important to be aware of them. For example policies around faith in the workplace will differ; some companies allow formal faith networks whilst in other companies they can only exist informally.

### Positive faith contributions

The chaplaincy has since been instrumental in helping companies also appreciate the positive contributions of faith to the work place, from making suggestions about the use



*A Canary Wharf prayer room*

and design of company prayer rooms to giving advice about various religious practices and faith festivals, like fasting and praying during Ramadan. A couple of years ago, as part of Citigroup's Diversity Week, I chaired a lively multi-faith panel discussion. Taking place at the outset of the credit crunch it felt particularly significant. How could faith help in an economic downturn? The panel comprised three managing directors from Citigroup's Fixed Income department, a Jew, a Muslim and a Christian. Far from having a dispute about dogma or proselytisation, these

people of faith all spoke constructively and compassionately about honesty and integrity in business and employment practices.

As a Christian chaplain it is important that I maintain the integrity of my faith, and for me that includes being generous and supportive to those of other faiths as well as those who have none. I believe that Christian mission includes hospitality and service, welcoming and sharing the love of God with all and valuing each individual.

### Mediation

Mediation and reconciliation are also part of my work. The chaplain can act as an honest broker, a neutral agent who can bring unlikely parties together. For example, at the start of the economic crisis, I facilitated a private meeting of senior bankers, some Christian, with the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was an important opportunity for the Church to hear the issues directly from the bankers, and it provided the Archbishop with real knowledge and insight rather than through media interpretation. The following week the Archbishop referred to this meeting when he gave his Mansion House address, a speech which was marked with penetrating authority gained from first-hand engagement. I was quietly pleased to think that this significant meeting had been able to take place because of the relationship of trust which had been carefully nurtured since I first began working in Canary Wharf.

### Relationships with the home church

As workplace chaplains, we bridge the gap between the public arena and the church. We may try to create some kind of Christian community within the workplace but we need to remember the multiplicity of communities people belong to - where they live, where they work, where they spend their leisure time. Christians who work in Canary Wharf or the City of London may also be active members of the local church where they live, a church near their office, a Christian fellowship group within their company – and there are growing on-line communities too.



▶▶ The church needs to be involved in mission and ministry at both ends of the commuter line, at work and at home. Following a casual workplace conversation over coffee, I was able to put a couple in touch with their local vicar for a blessing of their new house. Sometimes this linking-up is international: I once prepared a workplace couple for marriage - their wedding ceremony was going to take place in South Africa but they also wanted help in finding a church in Australia where their company was about to relocate them.

In times of ongoing pastoral need, for example, when a worker's wife or husband, parent or child is ill in hospital, the local church is often in a better position to provide support than the City church or workplace chaplaincy. Or when a worker loses his or her job: since 2008 I have had a number of calls from clergy outside of London seeking my advice on how they might support people in their parishes who have been made redundant from their City or Canary Wharf jobs. The redundancy process is so brusque there is little that I am able to do for these people at the workplace: workers are called into a meeting with their manager, told that their services are no longer required, asked to clear their desks immediately and go home, which could



*Asked to clear their desks immediately*

be two hours or 300 miles away, or even in another country. The people I support are the managers themselves and those still with jobs who suffer survivor's guilt.

### Ministering or being ministered to?

Occasionally I have been asked, 'What can my company do for you?' That stopped me in my tracks at first - it was not a question I was expecting. I realised that there's a trap that chaplains can fall into. We can be so occupied with offering our services that we can forget to explore with others how we might work together for the common good. This question continues to make me think. How might the church's mission and ministry be developed in the workplace beyond the provision of support in times of national crisis or personal need? What are the responsibilities of the institutional Church, the local Christian communities and the individual Christian worker in promoting the common good?

I had a phone call from a theological college asking me to come and talk to some ordinands about ministry in the workplace as part of their special studies week. I suggested instead they came to London. The next year the college contacted me again and asked if another group of students could come. The first visit had gone well but this time I asked the chair of Morgan Stanley, whom I'd met a couple of times, if he was able to join us. His response was more than I had hoped for. He offered to host the day himself and we planned the programme together using a variety of speakers from the bank to submerge the students within a corporate business culture for a day. The ordinands experienced a real working environment as well enjoying a tour of the trading floor. The corporate lunch was another highlight, served without wine in accordance with current best practice. This partnership with Morgan Stanley is now in its fifth year, and another with HSBC has been running for three years. Among the students' feedback are comments like: 'I have a better understanding of the complexity of the workforce and the issues they face,' and 'I discovered that there are distinctive and different work cultures even within one industry,' and 'I will continue to reflect on the ethics of business, work priorities, and the identity and nature of money.' These partnerships have also helped the business people to explore their working environments from other viewpoints.





▶▶ These partnerships have been valuable for me too. Not only have I been able to meet different people and to take part in discussions about staff development and leadership, but having the ordinands twice a year stimulates me to reflect more deeply on theological issues related to work and business.

### Discipleship in the City

Often there is a gap between what we believe and how we work that out day to day in the workplace. What does it mean to belong to the Kingdom of God and to live at the same time in the world? How can we experience the Kingdom of God in the here-and-now? As a chaplain I try to help people see God's Kingdom right where they are, in their midst, with their eyes of faith wide open to seeing God at work around them, and to hearing his small voice even in the tumult of the trading floor. We need to recover the Reformation worldview and renounce any separation of sacred and secular. Recently I was reading Alister McGrath's book *Roots that Refresh* in which he explores Reformation spirituality and was reminded that John Calvin writes in the Institutes, "All things are made for us, in order that we may know and acknowledge the author, and celebrate his goodness towards us by giving him thanks."<sup>1</sup> We must not compartmentalise our work, or think that what we do in church on Sunday is more



John Calvin  
painting by an unknown 16th century artist

important or more holy than other areas of our lives. We need to have integrated lives as whole people in Christ, fully alive and fully human. If we renounce the world, we are in danger of renouncing God who so wondrously created it. 'Everything that God has created is good, and nothing is to be rejected provided it is accepted with thanksgiving' (1 Timothy 4:4).

Recently I met a newly appointed CEO who said he was still trying to work out what he could bring to his job as a Christian. I suggested that if I broke him in half like a stick of Brighton rock he would find Christian running right through him. My point was that everything he does in his job, whether planning and chairing strategic meetings, sending and answering emails, entertaining new clients, will be guided by his faith in Christ, which he needs to nourish through constant prayer, Bible study and being a member of a Christian community. We need to help people in the workplace grasp afresh what it means to be Christian disciples first and foremost, and to understand that there is no higher vocation than following Jesus Christ and serving him as Lord.

### Canary Wharf study groups

Christians in various levels of management, especially senior executives, have told me how isolated they feel due to the responsibilities of their jobs and long working hours. It is hard for them to be actively involved in Christian communities in or near their workplace, or to attend their church home groups regularly, or simply to be understood by clergy. This seemed to me another important challenge that needed to be addressed.

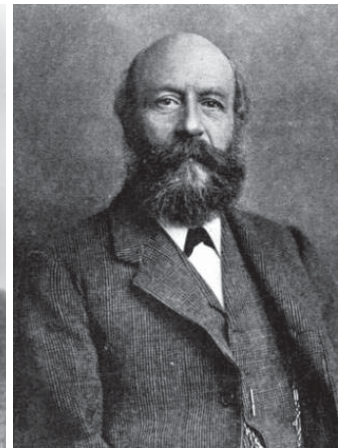
Again I looked for another partnership. This time it came via the St Paul's Cathedral Institute who, jointly with Heythrop College, was developing a study course for Christians in senior management positions, to enable them 'to integrate their faith, home and professional life; develop a corporate culture that reflects their faith and values; and exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large.'



▶▶ Our Canary Wharf study groups have been meeting for four years now and each year I seek out contacts to start a new one. The groups are mutually supportive and operate with the Chatham House rule of confidentiality. I remember one session called ‘Handling Change at Work’. Nearly everyone present was involved in implementing financial cutbacks and telling people they no longer had a job. It was the first time these managers had been given a safe space to talk about their own often unacknowledged pain.



Joseph Rowntree



John Cadbury

### The \$64,000 question

Many of the people I work with are financially wealthy, though there aren’t as many greedy and reckless millionaires as some parts of the media would have us believe. Perhaps the \$64,000 question for a chaplain to Canary Wharf is what would Jesus have to say about all this money and wealth?

Putting it starkly in the Sermon on the Mount, he said, ‘You cannot serve God and Money’ (Matthew 6:24). Yet there are many examples in Scripture of people who using their wealth served God generously. Jesus’ own ministry was funded by wealthy women: ‘Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him’ (Matthew 27:55). It was a wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, who went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus so he could lay him in his own unused tomb (Matthew 22:57ff). In his lifetime, Jesus regularly benefitted from people’s generosity and hospitality, staying in their homes, or holding large meetings in their rooms, as did Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 16:14f)

Jesus condemned greed, idolatry and exploitation. He did not condemn wealth as such, but challenged the way we use it. ‘To whom much is given, much is required’ (Luke 12:48).

The more money we have, the greater the responsibility we have it to use it well and

wisely: to love God with all our money, along with our heart, soul, mind and strength. Jesus shows us another way with money – generous, cheerful giving. Nineteenth-century Christian industrialists like Joseph Rowntree and John Cadbury knew this. They made large profits but lived modestly and ploughed their profits back into social welfare projects as well as their businesses. We need people today to accumulate wealth fairly and to contribute creatively and generously to the poor and needy.

### A vital resource

Today the working population on the Canary Wharf is about 100,000, and there are 200 shops and restaurants. By 2025, the working population will have doubled again, to over 200,000, with an estimated 400 shops and restaurants. This week I am meeting with a web design team from Barclays Bank to build a new chaplaincy website. They keep asking me, ‘What message do you want the website to say about the role and work of the chaplaincy?’ Canary Wharf Chaplaincy is more than a religious source of support when things go wrong – it’s a vital resource to help the church engage with the world of business and to equip Christians to make a positive difference in their workplace. ■

### Note

1 Alister McGrath, *Roots that Refresh*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1991, p129.

*Revd Dr Fiona Stewart-Darling has been the Bishop’s Chaplain in Docklands for six and half years; before then she was a university chaplain. People often assumed her PhD is in Theology, and many of the business community are surprised when they discover that it is in Chemistry. It is a great discussion starter when they ask.*