

Supporting Business in the Second City: Birmingham's ChaplaincyPlus

Steve Bavington and Joel Wilson describe this networking and pastoral work

Set in the heart of Birmingham's business and financial district, ChaplaincyPlus leads the way in Birmingham in supporting business people as they tread the carpeted corridors of the region's business powerhouses.

During the early part of the new millennium, a number of key Christian business people came together to discuss the issue of whether and how the wider church was supporting Christians in the business community. The perceived lack of cohesive support had led both to Christian workers feeling secluded and other people being beyond the reach of the church - with both groups spending most of their waking lives in their offices totally isolated from conversations about faith.

This conversation led to the eventual recruitment in 2003 of Chris Dinsdale, who had spent the previous decade working for Christians in Property and Midweek in Mayfair, in the heart of the City of London. 14 years on, and now under different leadership, ChaplaincyPlus is still a thriving charity which has three distinct focus areas: its network, events, and partnerships.

The network of over 700 people is supported by a small staff, led by ex-advertising executive Steve Bavington. Through this network, and other contacts, they offer one-to-one pastoral and chaplaincy support which is tailored to the

individual and is available to all, regardless of faith or worldview. There are also a number of specific groups which support and connect individuals - these include 'City Legal', 'City Finance', 'City Women', 'City Men' and 'City Lights', which supports and encourages young professionals.

ChaplaincyPlus also organises a wide variety of events. Some events bring Christians together for mutual encouragement and teaching, and others provide opportunities for Christians to invite their friends and colleagues. These events enable working people of all sorts to reflect on and develop their leadership, interpersonal skills and inner life.


There is also a strong emphasis on developing kingdom partnerships between the business community and Churches and other Christian charities, between businesses and business networks, and even between individuals. Partnerships are seen to be a key way of working, particularly with regard to running events - modelling the kingdom principle of being 'part of one body'.

One of the new openings in the city is the development of offering workplace chaplaincy, which provides a regular listening service to businesses. This includes agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding to deliver 'chaplaincy', and recruiting and training chaplains to meet the need. Despite the strong positive

business case for chaplaincy, this has until recently been treated with wariness and suspicion by the large corporates, who make up the majority of the firms in the city centre.

Recently, two such Memoranda of Understanding have been signed, and other conversations are emerging. More business leaders are recognising how vital it is to take care of their staff in every area of their life. This is hugely encouraging, as it is a sign that the doors to business are not as tightly shut as perhaps imagined.

Often the route into the firm has been through the in-house Christian Groups. Again, these have shown signs of becoming more active. In partnership with Transform Work UK, ChaplaincyPlus has been working hard to support existing and new in-house Christian Workplace Groups.

There has been a noticeable increase in corporate receptiveness to new Christian in-house prayer or bible study groups, as a result of the rise of 'diversity' agendas which have helped to make faith groups more generally acceptable. This has particularly helped groups of Christians within firms who want to meet at lunchtime in various workplaces. 

For more information about ChaplaincyPlus visit www.chaplaincyplus.org.uk or steve.bavington@chaplaincyplus.org.uk



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