

# Ministry at Work:

## The story so far: 2012-2019

*Those in the professional services sector carry heavy loads and are often lonely. **Mo Trudel** traces the story of Ministry at Work, a service started in Stoke-on-Trent which found a need for pastoral care but also a spiritual longing. In response, Ministry at Work provides a dispersed new monasticism, retreats on Iona, one-to-one pastoral care as well as chaplaincy training and talks to business.*

*Ministry at Work* was launched at the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce in 2012 to offer pastoral support to those in the professional services sector. Those working at the helm of their professions carry heavy loads, often unseen by staff and unknown by families; it can be a lonely business. Our geographical area began in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. It now reaches across Lichfield Diocese which includes Shropshire, the city of Lichfield and the Black Country – although we are also well served in the Black Country by BCUIM, Bill Mash's team.

A few unbidden conversations gave us the direction of travel for this work. A CEO recovering from brain cancer spoke to us of meeting Jesus on the operating table; another had recently become a Christian through an Alpha course; a manager was journeying though his wife's cancer treatment. So the stories flooded in during our first few weeks. Often people have no forum to share these experiences with. Listening is what we offer first and foremost to those at the frontline of business.

Chaplaincy is still little known in business; it is more common perhaps in the armed services, hospitals or schools. Love, care and kindness are not the everyday language of business, and yet on this basis we made connections with ease. What

we hadn't expected to hear was a different need emerging: not just a need for pastoral care, but also a spiritual longing and a desire for significance.

In response, a few Christians in business began to pray together monthly in partnership with Danny Flynn, the CEO of Stoke YMCA. A powerful partnership emerged as both Mo and Danny had discerned in their business careers this desire for significance and a searching for language to frame people's natural spirituality. Much has been written about well-being at work, work-life balance and achieving your potential through mindfulness. Yet there hadn't been an opening for people to experience Christian mindfulness as practised by our monastic and Celtic traditions. We saw an opening to work this out with smaller groups of people, through the *Unify* conference for the national YMCA's spirituality team, and with our prayer groups.

In 2012 Lichfield Diocese had begun the Community of St Chad, a dispersed community following five rhythms of life and meeting in small groups to encourage each other. Mo became an early member. Already a spiritual director, she found that the connection to business was natural to make, and people were very curious to know more.

Through prayer and discernment we began experimenting with daily retreats, then facilitating residential retreats and latterly exploring pilgrimage together to the Iona community.

We developed resources for teaching, and spoke at regional and national conferences on finding a rhythm of life that sustains us during the working week.

One of our trustees who had left the legal profession as part of his journey had discovered retreat as a life-changing experience. He is now pursuing a PhD to unlock the therapeutic effect of this on his counselling and chaplaincy practice in the workplace.

We continue to listen, offering pastoral care on a one-to-one basis; we see over 150 people a year. We are developing ways to train more chaplains, using *Chaplaincy Everywhere*, linking with the Diocese of Lichfield on their training days, and through meeting up for peer-to-peer support. We offer resources freely to those we are mentoring, and have developed a series of talks to business on contentious issues such as Faith and Science. We have been involved in blessings for toxic workplaces, interfaith blessings for city developments, marriage blessings and healing prayer for those in grief, childlessness, recovering from addiction, and more.