

# 2

UNIT TWO



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# CHAPLAINCY ESSENTIALS

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## KNOWING WHERE YOU ARE

The **Methodist** Church 

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## Worship

*Light a candle and focus quietly on the flame, you may also wish to play some reflective music. Reflect on the way that all our eyes are drawn towards the candle flame and the way that God loves us and wants to draw us closer. When you are ready, offer this short reflective prayer:*

As our eyes are drawn to the flame  
draw us nearer to you Lord.  
Hold our gaze, fill our sight  
and flood our hearts with your light. **Amen.**

### Review of previous unit

If you have been able to visit another chaplaincy or a different place of worship, spend some time talking about the experience. Focus on what it was like to be a guest and what you can learn for your own chaplaincy as a guest in the organisation where you work. If your visit is planned for the future, make sure you will have time to talk about it then.

### What's in this unit?

#### Read

This unit and the next one form a pair – they are about ways of getting to know the people and places where you are a chaplain. This unit focuses on understanding the places and organisations you are serving. The next unit will focus more on ways of getting to know the people you work with.

Most of us have been lost at some time in our lives, perhaps as children separated from our families in a crowded place; perhaps on a journey in the days before the satellite navigation. Knowing where you are and how things fit together in the place where you do your chaplaincy work is an essential starting point. Newcomers to an organisation might well be offered an 'Orientation' course. Perhaps the most important task for a new chaplain is to be orientated in the place where you serve.



#### Starter activity

Try to remember your first day at school or your first day in a new job. Share your stories about these 'first days'.

- What did it feel like not to know your way around?
- Did you know how to behave in this new place?
- Were there any hidden rules which you didn't know about?
- How long did it take you to begin to feel at home in your new place?

## 1) Understanding your host

### Read

#### Chaplaincy case study

When Mike first offered to join the airport chaplaincy team as a volunteer, his only knowledge of airports was from being a passenger once or twice a year. He felt called to the chaplaincy team because he wanted to do something for the Church's mission in the wider community, and the airport felt like a vibrant and exciting place to meet people. As Mike began to visit the airport regularly, he realised just how complicated the site and the organisation are. Many different companies and concerns operate alongside in the airport. There is the airport company itself, but also the airlines, shops, restaurants, car hire companies, baggage handling, security staff and the Border Force who manage passport controls. The airport itself is a large site with terminal buildings, runways, parking areas and a complex road system. For security and safety reasons parts of the airport have restricted access for staff as well as passengers. All of this left Mike wondering where and how to begin to understand this complicated environment with so many different needs and groups.

#### For discussion

Think about Mike's role at the airport, even if it is very different to your own chaplaincy. How well do you know your way around the physical place where you are a chaplain? How well do you understand the ways in which the organisations, groups, departments or businesses served by your chaplaincy fit together? Here are some ideas which might help Mike to understand how the airport works and to find his way around. Look at the list and then talk about the strengths and weaknesses of each suggestion for both Mike and for you in your own chaplaincy:

- Collect advertising and publicity leaflets in the airport and arrange them in a montage – think carefully about where you place each one asking how the different activities they advertise relate to each other.
- Get a map of the airport terminals and walk around the entire space. If there is no map of your chaplaincy area, is it possible to walk around and draw your own sketch map? (Be aware that there can be issues of safety or security in accessing different areas in some workplaces)
- Get a colleague to pretend to be a visitor and ask you directions to a number of different places. Use this exercise to discover any gaps in your knowledge.

## 2) Organisations and culture

### Read

Think for a few moments about the place where you do your chaplaincy work. Is it a single organisation like a school or a large office, or is it a more complicated public space like a town centre, a shopping centre or a network of people?

### For discussion

As you think about the place where you are a chaplain try to answer these questions. Not all the answers will be straightforward. Try to answer the questions at more than one level. For example, an organisation might have a mission statement which says it exists to provide the best possible service, whereas their customer/client might feel that it is being run for the convenience of the staff and the staff might think it is run for the benefit of the shareholders. There is often a difference between what an organisation says about itself and what the people who use it or work in it feel and say.

Who 'owns' this place?  
Whom does this place say it serves?  
Whom do you think it really serves?  
Who says they are in charge?  
Who is really in charge?  
Who is responsible for this place?  
Who makes the decisions in this place?  
Who uses this place?  
Who thinks this place is important?  
Who thinks it is not important?

## 3) Hidden rules

### Chaplaincy case study

Sue quickly realised that one of the best uses of her time as a school chaplain was to make sure that she visited the staff room at break and lunch. Even these break times could be very busy for teachers, who always had to be ready for the next period. With little time to get lunch or morning coffee Sue had to learn that the staff room had a number of rules. There were rules about washing up the mugs; rules about how the tea and coffee were paid for; rules about what went where. The trouble was nobody told her about any of the rules until she had broken one by mistake.

### For discussion

- What hidden rules can you identify in your host organisation?
- How can you find out what these rules are?

## 4) Horrible histories

### Read

Another way to find out about the culture of the place where you are a chaplain is to learn about its history. Some organisations hosting chaplaincies will have a very long history, which might well have been written down, in a hospital or a university for example. In other places it may seem strange to ask about history – but every place has a story to tell. If you ask around, you are sure to find people who have interesting memories which can help you understand more about the place where you are a chaplain.

As well as this kind of formal history, there will be all kinds of shared stories and memories that shape the culture of a place. It may be a story about what happened at the Christmas party, a common complaint which everyone seems to share about some part of the organisation, the memory of something which went badly wrong, or a joke which everyone wants to tell you. Listening to the stories which people share will help you to understand what is important for them. Listen, but be careful what you repeat. Sometimes stories can be no more than gossip and chaplains should be aware of stories which are meant to harm others. We are called to use our words carefully in order to build people up.

## 5) Working safely

### Read

It has become very common to make fun of 'Health and Safety', but keeping safe in your chaplaincy is an essential part of knowing your environment. Most chaplaincy environments are extremely safe but there are real and obvious hazards in other places. It is important to understand that the organisation where you are a chaplain has a duty to look after the health and safety of everyone in their workplace – and that includes you the chaplain.

These three chaplaincy pictures should speak for themselves. It should be clear why these chaplains need to have special regard to health and safety in their work. Safety in your chaplaincy might be less obvious but must still be taken seriously.



### Activity

Make a list of any potential health and safety issues in your chaplaincy work.

### Read

There are a few simple steps that all chaplains should take:

- Find out about the health and safety policies in your host organisation
- Make sure you have appropriate health and safety training – if necessary seek expert advice
- Find out who is responsible for health and safety in your host organisation
- Make your own risk assessment for your chaplaincy work.

This course is not the place to offer Health and Safety training, so it is important to seek expert help.

## 6) Further reflection

### Short Reading

“Surely the Lord is in this place - and I did not know it!” Genesis 28:16 (NRSV)

In this unit we have been thinking about places and how we can understand them better for our chaplaincy work. Whilst all Christians believe that God is with us everywhere, some find value in the idea of ‘holy places’, or ‘thin places’ – the places where God seems to feel very close.

In your own devotions in the coming week:

- Reflect on what makes a place holy feel for you.
- How and when do you feel the presence of God in your chaplaincy work?
- How is God present in the place where you do chaplaincy?
- When does God feel absent in your chaplaincy work?
- Is your chaplaincy in a holy place?

## 7) Putting it into practice

Choose one task from each list to be completed before the next session of the course.

A

- Write a document for your successor as chaplain explaining the organisation you are working in.
- For your log book create a montage of pictures and images of the organisation think about how to lay them out to show the structure of the organisation.
- Write a list of risks for a new chaplain.
- Collect some policy statements from the organisation where you are a chaplain (including health and safety documents) and keep them in your log book.

B

- Try to find someone who has been at the place where you are a chaplain for a long time – whether as a member of staff, a client/customer or a volunteer. Ask them to tell you what the organisation or place was like when they first arrived and what changes they have seen.
- Ask the longest serving chaplain to tell you the story of the chaplaincy team.

### Summary prayer:

God of all places and all times  
we thank you for the times and the places which you have given to us.  
For the places where we live, work and worship;  
for the places where we are called to be chaplains.  
Bless us in these places and make them holy,  
help us to find you wherever we are  
so that we can worship and serve you  
in every part of our lives.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Additional resources:

Guidelines for Beginning Chaplaincy: This is an introduction for new university chaplains prepared by the Church of England. It suggests a number of ways of getting to know the university and its people and some key questions for new chaplains to ask. These suggestions could easily be adapted to beginning chaplaincy and a range of different contexts. Available online at: [www.churchofengland.org/education/colleges-universities/he/chaplaincy-resources/getting-started.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/education/colleges-universities/he/chaplaincy-resources/getting-started.aspx) (click on New Chaplains Start Here).

Threlfall-Holmes M & Newlitt M, (2011) Being a Chaplain, London, SPCK. This book contains stories from over twenty chaplains working in different places and four essays on key issues for chaplains.

Organisational Culture: There are a number of websites describing organisational culture. Search for definitions of this term on the Internet.