



# THE PULSE

A publication of the Northern Ireland Healthcare Chaplains' Association

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Pause for Thought | Chaplaincy and WHSCT | New to Chaplaincy | Challenges and Blessing

## Upcoming Training 2024

### Journal Club

Michael McMillan

Thursday 7th March

11.00am-12noon

### MDT Training -

*Conversations about Dying*

Dr. Kathryn Mannix

Tuesday 23rd April

9.00am - 4.30pm

Riddell Hall, Belfast

### NIHCA AGM

All members welcome

Tuesday 28th May

9.00am-2.00pm

T3 Conference Facilities, House of Vic Ryn, Moira Road, Lisburn

### Zoom Training - Reflective Writing Workshop

Rev Dr Steve Nolan

10.00am-11.30am



### Chaplaincy and Western Trust, Mrs Anne Love, Chaplaincy Manager, WHSCT

It is hard to think of a time when the need to recognise and meet the spiritual needs of patients and their families was greater than during the Covid-19 pandemic. As we thankfully leave those dark days behind, we can reflect that as a Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy Team we were privileged to support patients, families and staff during some of their most difficult days. People have commented with warm appreciation about the huge benefits that Chaplaincy support brought to those of faith, other faiths or none.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) has a very experienced and dedicated Chaplaincy Team, who in addition support Trust meetings and functions. Chaplains are integral to the health and wellbeing of our patients and highly valued members of our multi-professional teams.

The Trust is at the early stages of a reconfiguration of chaplaincy provision. Preparatory work has started and we believe that there are opportunities to increase accessibility to all the people for whom we have professional responsibility, offering pastoral and spiritual care which is relevant to the population we serve in the 21st century.

As our Chaplaincy service continues to evolve, we look forward with optimism and hope. In addition to the well-established Chaplaincy Team, we now have in

place dedicated Chaplaincy hours in the North West Cancer Centre, Maternity and Children's and Mental Health support in the Acute Hospitals; these new posts are based on 80% support to patients and 20% support to staff wellbeing. We also plan to appoint a Lead Chaplain, and the advertisement is imminent.

As well as providing support and resources to patients and relatives, Chaplains are collaborating on new staff wellbeing initiatives such as a 'Thought for Week' and 'Tea for the Soul' for those who wish to engage. Equally there is support in place for Chaplains if required, and the unwavering support of the Trust's Senior Management for the service is greatly appreciated.

Encompass will keep us all busy going forward. We look ahead to learning from colleagues in other Trusts and undertaking the training that is needed to equip us to be ready for WHSCT going live in March 2025.

## Healthcare Chaplaincy - Challenges and Blessings, Rev Derek Johnston, BHSCT Lead Chaplain and NIHCA President

Recently I had the opportunity to lead an online seminar with a group of Methodist ministry students. Among different areas that were covered, I shared some challenges in chaplaincy and some blessings. I have expanded a few of them below.

### • Some challenges in chaplaincy:

- In chaplaincy, life/pain/suffering can feel very focused in a small glass bowl of hospital/hospice. People can share very personal and painful things with you in the space of a short conversation. It can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming.  
*So, make sure you have different means to restore your body, strength, mind and soul. What are yours?*
- Chaplaincy can sometimes feel a bit isolated. Perhaps you work in a small team when you seldom meet your chaplaincy colleagues. Perhaps you feel your particular denomination/belief group doesn't really value what you do or support you in it. Perhaps some colleagues are more difficult to get on with.  
*So, make sure you are committed to keep connected to others, even if it is hard work. What can you do to keep connected?*
- In chaplaincy, we are not in charge. We are in a very real sense, very small fish in a large ocean. If we want to be taken seriously, we have to learn accountability, be professional, be able to show that what we do can make a positive difference.  
*How can you show that?*
- In chaplaincy, you may face different theological and ethical positions within the team. Some things that you see as very black and white, may be more gray for others; some things that you think are very important, may be less so for others.  
*So, be prepared to share with grace and learn in humility. How can you show that?*

### • Some blessings in chaplaincy:

- In chaplaincy, you can be part of a supportive and caring team, perhaps even more so than in your particular denomination. Find ways to share together, celebrate together, support each other and learn together.  
*What can you do this month to support and enhance your team?*
- Chaplains are essential to delivering pastoral, religious, spiritual care to countless patients/clients, family members/carers and staff, often at the most difficult of times. Across NI, chaplains visit and support thousands of patients, families and staff every week. We make a difference!  
*How does that show in your area of chaplaincy?*

➤ In chaplaincy we have the privilege of being welcomed in as a stranger to people’s pain and vulnerabilities. At times, part of me may wish I wasn’t in that situation or hearing that story, but, at the same time, I recognize I am standing/sitting on holy ground.

*What sustains your sense of privilege and gives you strength to go on?*

➤ It is said that more people pass through the doors of our healthcare institutions than through the doors of our churches, so chaplaincy is a wonderful opportunity to share God’s grace and hope through appropriate pastoral care.

*What is appropriate or inappropriate? How do you know the difference?*

I wonder do you identify with any of the above challenges or blessings.

- ❖ Perhaps you could take a few moments to reflect on particular challenges you have faced in your chaplaincy. How did they impact you and others? What helped you in those circumstances? What did you learn through them?
- ❖ Now reflect on some blessings you have experienced in your chaplaincy. Why/how are they blessings? How did they impact you and others? What did you learn through them?

Thank you for who you are and all you do!

### **New to Chaplaincy, Mrs Anna Burcombe, Chaplain, BHSCT**

My name is Anna and I’m married to Colin who is a Presbyterian minister in East Belfast. After I completed my degree in theology, we had five children who are now 11,13,17,18 and 19. Through these years I experienced a lot of life: ups and downs where now that I feel God has used all these experiences and called me to healthcare chaplaincy and set me in this particular place. I’m currently doing an MA in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care with Cambridge Theological Federation. It’s distance and part-time which works well for family life and my other work, part time in an Art Gallery! As part of the course, I’m on placement as a student chaplain in the Belfast Trust. Although I have been really enjoying general chaplaincy, my particular interest currently, is mental health chaplaincy and so I have the privilege of being with and getting to know patients at Knockbracken and AMHIC in the City Hospital. I have enjoyed all the aspects of chaplaincy that I’ve learned so far: getting to know staff, listening to patients’ experiences and being present with them, hearing their stories and if they would like to pray with them and read Scripture with them. It’s also been fun to get to know other chaplains too and learn from their experience and wisdom!

### **Announcements**

#### **AGM**

Please note the new date for the AGM.

#### **Assistance with Travel**

At the last Executive meeting, it was agreed that financial assistance may be offered to those who would like to attend a training but concerned about the travel costs. Members in such circumstances should speak to Sanna Mallon.

#### **Sneak Peek at 2024/2025**

We are delighted to be welcoming Dr Daniel Nuzum, Rev Prof Stephen Williams, Dr Susan Williams, Rev Prof Chris Cook, Prof Peter Kevern among others to contribute to our training programme for 2024/2025. All plans are subject to Executive Committee approval.

## Pause for Thought - “I lift my eyes up to the hills” - Pastor Carolyn Patterson, Chaplain, BHSCT

Entering the Quiet Room in the Cancer Centre at the Belfast City Hospital, the first thing I see through the wall to wall windows are the hills surrounding the city. I am reminded of Psalm 121 v1, ‘I lift my eyes up to the hill’. Regularly patients, staff and visitors make the same connection, answering the question that follows, ‘where does my help come from?’ - ‘My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth’ (v2).

This Psalm is one I read often to patients and their families, and on occasions to staff, when they need comfort or reassurance. I also receive encouragement and motivation from this scripture; particularly on days with difficult conversations, with unknown circumstances on a callout and when bad news is being given to a patient. What an assurance it is to know the Maker of heaven and earth, our Creator, helps us when we lift our eyes up to Him. What confidence is gained when reading ‘God neither slumbers or sleeps’ (v4), ‘He is watching over you’ (v5, 7 & 8) and ‘keeping you from all harm’ (v7).

As I look up to the hills surrounding Belfast my eyes are taken off and over all that is naturally surrounding. Likewise looking up to God my eyes are taken off and over all that I need help for, to the One who is my help. What an assurance and blessing it is to know God is looking down on us day and night, every hour and minute; wherever we are, whatever we are doing and whoever we are with. Prov 15 v 3 says ‘The eyes of the Lord are everywhere: eyes of our loving Father that say ‘I love you’ (Jn 3v16), eyes of our Comforter that bring peace (Jn 14v27), eyes of our gracious Lord full of grace and mercy (2 Cor 12v9), eyes of our Provider that reassure ‘I shall not want’ (Ps 23 v1), and eyes of our Protector keeping watch over us (Ps 46 v1).

When walking the hills of Belfast the whole city can be watched over. Everything appears small, even the multi-storey Tower Block of The City Hospital. The busyness and noise of the city disappears, the air is fresher and the colour of the trees and grass seem to be greener. As I look to them from the Cancer Centre or the city streets, their vastness, beauty, serenity and steadfastness, speak to me of God’s greatness, might and majesty; the One who is my help watching me day and night, watching my coming and going, both now and forevermore (v8).



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