

# Social Responsibility Commission | London District

Issue 02 | Winter & Spring 2013

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## Faithful, responsible presence in 2013 Social justice, chaplaincy and what lies ahead

Welcome to the second regular newsletter for the Social Responsibility Commission of the London District of the Methodist Church. In this issue you'll find updates, events and announcements around many areas of Methodist social engagement.

You'll also notice a collection of reflections and stories on the theme of **Chaplaincy**.

The SRC has chosen this theme for the Winter 2013 newsletter. Chaplaincy is as nuanced as each community in our diverse, global city of London is unique.

We've asked a number of chaplains in different situations to share their wisdom and experience with the London District. You'll find a list of Methodists in chaplaincy on the back page.

Chaplaincy has also been named the theme for **Spring Synod**. Check pg. 2 to find out more.

We'd love to hear your chaplaincy stories. Send them to me, Erin Clark, on [communications@methodistlondon.org.uk](mailto:communications@methodistlondon.org.uk).

Happy reading!

## Chaplaincy & mental health

### An interview with Charlotte Collins

*I spoke with Charlotte Collins, a Methodist minister who is a chaplain with the West London Mental Health Trust, to find out more about her work as a mental health chaplain.*

EC: Tell me what it's like to be a full-time chaplain.

CC: My work is partly about creating a space for people to tell their stories and to find meaning in what's happened to them. Many of the people I see have been hospitalised, some sectioned, and are struggling to find medication that works for them. They're dealing with stigma, loneliness, depression often related to housing, unemployment and family issues. In addition to traditional religious responsibilities – sacraments, scripture, prayer and

services, for example – I work with people in therapeutic contexts, helping them to recover hope and a sense of identity however challenged this may be by their struggles with mental health. I get referrals from recovery [community mental health] teams, in-patient staff, carers and service users wanting a space to talk about their spiritual and religious needs, sometimes wanting to be linked into particular religious communities including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian.

I also provide support for carers and NHS mental health staff, many of whom work under great pressure and who may be more comfortable talking with someone 'unofficial' rather than having their concerns formalised

through the Occupational Health route.

EC: What are some of the toughest challenges you face?

CC: The Trust was awarded government funding in 2010 to implement the recovery model at all levels of its service. The recovery approach puts the lived experience of mental illness at the centre to inform practice and policy. The recovery philosophy is about supporting people to find a fulfilling life beyond illness based on shared decision making and working collaboratively. It takes seriously people's dreams and aspirations, believing that people can recover enough to lead a fulfilling life given support and access to the appropriate resources and therapy. One

of the challenges is being part of encouraging this cultural shift because it involves services users, staff and carers in a different kind of relationship. It can require diplomacy when there's resistance. Not everyone 'gets' what chaplaincy is about but the Recovery model values holistic care in which spiritual care has a key role enabling people to cope with stress and helping them keep grounded. We recognize the limitations but we're committed to engendering hope – to empowering people by giving them more of a say in their own care.

(Continued on p.2)

## An interview with Charlotte Collins, cont'd.

EC: And do you find a lot of resistance to Recovery as a philosophy of mental health work?

CC: Sometimes. Some people who have been in mental health for years can be sceptical about Recovery principles, so part of my role is advocating for Recovery as a viable approach to mental health. I emphasise how it equips both carers and service users to make the best possible choices about their lives and how it addresses the 'whole person.' I have found that Christian communities – the right kind – can be wonderful sources of support for people suffering with borderline personality disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar etc. If they are open and welcoming, good at accepting people just as they are, willing to walk with them, they can be life-giving. Some churches cannot relax the black-and-white-ness of their theology, and some struggle to properly support those whose experiences of abuse, neglect, unemployment and loss of housing means they may be viewed as 'needy' churchgoers. As a chaplain concerned with the mental, emotional, physical and

spiritual health of those I meet it can be challenging to find the right kind of community to link people up with. Faith communities need to understand that mental health sufferers bring gifts, too. There a real need for education in society and churches to tackle the 'fear' element.

EC: You're a Methodist minister, but you have a background in therapy as well, is that right?

CC: Yes. I trained in counselling and person-centred therapy at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, volunteering for several years at a drop-in counselling centre in Aberdeen. This time taught me a lot about the potential healing in being listened to as well as learning about therapeutic process, boundaries, assessments, the referral process...all important things that aren't necessarily covered in ministerial training.

EC: How did you end up as a chaplain?

CC: I was stationed in the Home Counties as a minister but always felt the need to keep a foot in the 'parallel world' of urban poverty. During this appointment I

volunteered an evening a week at the Gatehouse in Oxford, a drop-in centre for the homeless. I absolutely loved being a volunteer, part of a team and not 'the minister'! I became team co-ordinator after a time and felt my participation in this work connected me with the spirit of the Wesleys' social awareness grounding of faith. Of course Wesley was a student at Oxford and regularly visited the prisons as part of his Christian discipleship.

When my next stationing came around I began to explore the possibility of getting into some work that was part chaplain, part circuit work, and had signed up to start volunteering with young offenders. But just as that was happening I got a call from someone at Stoke Mandeville Hospital about this new chaplaincy post at West London Mental Health which had just received funding. I was very unsure initially but went to visit. From the moment I pulled into the car park it felt so normal, like 'ah, this is now where I'm meant to be'. I applied and the rest, as they say, is history.

EC: So you were able to transition to full time chaplain work pretty quickly?

CC: Yes. I feel very lucky, like I had a big break. I believe it's usually not so instantaneous.

EC: What would you say to someone who is interested in getting involved with chaplaincy work?

CC: Get in touch with a local chaplaincy team in healthcare, prisons, homelessness – wherever you feel drawn to and just get involved. Generally speaking, skills from one chaplaincy experience are transferable to others – so if you can't find a volunteering opportunity in just the field you'd like, don't worry. Try another. If you're ordained, ask to do a placement; if you're a lay person, ask for voluntary experience. It is essential to spend time in this sort of situation to get a feel for what the work is really like – what the challenges are and if it 'fits' who you are and what you bring. I regularly have people on placement with me who volunteer for a few hours or a day a week.

EC: And what about those who aren't looking to get involved with chaplaincy but want to know how they can be more supportive of those struggling with mental health around them?

CC: It's important to remember the statistics: we're all on a continuum of mental health – in fact, 1 in 4 people will struggle with significant mental health issues. That's either us, or someone very near us. Keeping this in mind always helps when we're seeking to be more sensitive to people in our communities and churches. There are plenty of resources online to enhance our understanding of what it means to live with mental health issues and to direct people towards appropriate support and training. Charities such as MIND run many such programmes.

### London District Chairs to visit chaplaincies across the District during Lent 2013

District Chairs Jenny Impey, Stuart Jordan and Michaela Youngson are planning a series of visits to chaplaincies across the London District during the season of Lent, including health, prison, higher education, workplace and commercial chaplaincies.

**Spring Representative Synod 2013**, which will be held Saturday 27 April, will be focusing on the theme of Chaplaincy with the help of those involved in chaplaincy and with input from the Connexional team.

## Pastoral Care for Churches: April & September 2013

3 Apr and 24 Apr 2013 and 23 Sep and 30 Sep 2013

19:00-21.30 (two evening sessions) St Christopher's Hospice, Sydenham

This series of training forms a two-session course which will help those working in full time ministry, or working in part time or volunteer posts in church and faith communities to be better equipped to work with those from their faith community who are approaching the end of life.

Session 1 - Death and dying and communication skills

Session 2 - Spiritual pain and bereavement

Sessions will include a presentation, opportunities for discussion and role play to practise skills. The dying are part of every faith community and these communities have a responsibility to acknowledge the journey of those at the end of life and accompany the dying. This day is aimed at chaplains, clergy, faith leaders, spiritual carers, bereavement workers, social workers and those who have an interest in the ways in which meaning and creating meaning help the processes of dying and bereavement. If you have no formal role yet, are a member of a local church and are just interested in how to provide spiritual support to people with terminal illness.

For more information on this course and booking details, please ring 020 8768 4500 or visit [www.stchristophers.org.uk](http://www.stchristophers.org.uk)

These trainings will be held at St. Christopher's Hospice, London, and will cost £30. St. Christopher's Hospice is located at 51-59 Lawrie Park Road, London SE26 6DZ



## East London Community Land Trust

### Opening Celebration at St Clements with Danny Boyle

Thursday 13 December saw a celebration on the site of St Clements hospital, now London's first Community Land Trust. Local Mile End resident and film director Danny Boyle was present and switched on the lights to show the big red bow now adorning the tower of the hospital - a Christmas present to the people of Mile End. Boyle pledged his ongoing support for the CLT scheme as holding great promise for local families looking for genuinely affordable housing. Two weeks ago the architects John Thompson & partners undertook a community planning exercise over two days at Bow Methodist

Church to find out what local people wanted to see on the site.

Over 300 people came and participated. Two weeks later the architects fed back the findings to a packed church with their preliminary sketches for how the site could be built out. The architects have been retained by Galliford Try, the ELCLT's main partner in developing the site, along with Peabody who will manage the social rented element of the development.

This celebration represents a significant milestone for the ELCLT heading into 2013 and beyond. They hope to get the scheme finalised with plan-

ning permission and moving to start building. Meanwhile Galliford Try have agreed that the site may be used for interim uses such as the Secret Cinema, softball golf and similar activities to allow the community to begin to "own" the site which has been closed down for several years now.



Filmmaker Danny Boyle switches on the lights at St Clements Hospital in Bow.

## Volunteer chaplains at the Olympics

### Gillian Oxman on being a Games Pastor

At the autumn Synod of 2011 I volunteered to be a More than Gold representative for the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit.

What are Games Pastors? The stock answer was: A Christian presence on the street – but it was much more than this. We were placed at the main transport hubs: Kings Cross, Victoria train and bus stations, Waterloo, London Bridge to name a few. We were there to provide Christian

support to all staff, security guards, police, other games personnel as well as travelers be they visitors or commuters. For some it was just a greeting, for others a longer conversation; sometimes about faith but more often about the Games and the atmosphere of happiness and good will that was all around us. One group that will stay with me were the track layers who were working on the station (I was assigned London Bridge) as guides for visitors so that they got to

the right platform for their trains – they were being thanked for the work that they normally did and as well as for what they were now doing – not something that they were used to.

For the Olympics there were 300 games pastors and for the Paralympics, 150. We had pale blue high-viz jackets and baseball caps and carried blue bags. We worked in small groups usually about six in each team, walking in twos or threes – so we stood out from the "pink people" and the "purple people" as well as the security guards in their yellow high-viz jackets. This was the first time that More Than Gold had put pastors on the streets during a Games and the idea is being taken to Rio de Janeiro.



Social  
Responsibility  
Commission

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*Our vision:*

*“Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ throughout Greater London and the surrounding areas*

*and improving the well-being of people and their communities*

*by engaging pastorally and prophetically with the communities in which our churches are located and with the wider region.”*

**And now for something completely different**  
**Commercial Chaplaincy at Westfield Stratford City**

**InSpiration** at Westfield Stratford has been a part of the shopping centre since it opened in 2011. A rest and faith space for people of all faiths, InSpiration was included in the Centre as a place for prayer and reflection.

*Revd Claude Bailey is a Methodist Minister in the Newham Circuit who has recently trained as an Assistant Chaplain for Westfield Stratford. He writes:*

I have had many positive experiences of visiting the various shops, speaking and listening to managers and shop attendants. Their stories range from personal to work related stress, success or threat of redundancies and for a need to discover where their true vocation lies. Many individuals have visited the prayer space after a chaplain has visited them, and many people of all faiths have asked for prayers and expressed their thankfulness for the space. During 2012 there was a fatal incident in Westfield Centre; since then the work and the presence of the chaplains has been



Westfield Stratford City on its opening day.

affirmed, recognised and encouraged. It is a joy to walk into a store or shop and to call the staff by name and to see their welcoming smile, even better is when they in turn recognise and call you by name.

*Rev Ian Parker, Superintendent Minister for the Newham Circuit, is the co-ordinator for the Assistant Chaplains, helping with training and formal accreditation through Workplace Chaplains Essex and East London. He reflects:*

In order to staff InSpiration (the rest and faith room) between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. every day, a wonderful group of 20 – 30 welcomers from

all denominations has been recruited. There has been a lot of co-operation with a local mosque as most (though not all) users have been Muslims. Though this is not directly chaplaincy work, it is a great opportunity for interfaith co-operation and Christian welcome.

*Rev Julia Murphy had been chaplain at Westfield Stratford until October 2012. A new chaplain has been appointed and will start in March 2013. Please keep the team of welcomers, assistant chaplains and the new chaplain in your prayers during 2013.*

**Methodists in chaplaincy across London**  
**From mental health to media & higher ed. to Heathrow**

A full list of all Methodists involved in chaplaincy work is available from the District Resource Centre. Here is an inexhaustive list of Methodists, lay and ordained, working as paid or volunteer chaplains across the city:

David Innes **Southlands College**

John Sakutombo **Healthcare**

Julia Wiktorska **Royal Free Hospital**

Kofi Amissah **Royal Free Hospital**

Charlotte Collins **West London Mental Health Trust**

Pat Huntley **Chester House**

Tony Miles **Commercial Radio**

Andrew Goodhead **St Christopher's Hospice**

Chris Button **Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest**

Paul Wayne **Methodist Chaplaincy House**

Claude Bailey **Westfield Stratford City**

Anne Richardson **Chaplain among Deaf and Deafblind people**

Anne Rusbridge **MHA**

Mike Long **MHA**