

*Local Ecumenical Partnership and  
Registered charity: 1105783*



*“Supporting and engaging with people in the workplace”*

## ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

***Kent Workplace Mission is a registered charity,  
which is an LEP and Mission Partner of Regional groups within  
Churches Together in Kent.***

## Introduction

### *Archdeacon Andy Wooding Jones - Chair of Trustees*

When I wrote in our Annual Review last year, we recognised that 2022 had been a year of change for the charity. In contrast 2023 has been a year of consolidation for Kent Workplace Mission.

It has been really good to welcome Penny Culliford in April 2023 as she has picked up her responsibilities as our Co-ordinating Chaplain working across Kent and the London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley as she supports existing chaplains and chaplaincies as well as encouraging some exciting new initiatives. She is also the Lead Chaplain at Bluewater.

Madeleine Shepley continues to support many aspects of KWM as our Administrator and is often the first point of contact for our KWM family or those enquiring.

The KWM community serves in so many ways from Dungeness to Birkbeck & Anerley and from Tunbridge Wells to Rochester covering Town Centre retail, Transport, Emergency services, Local Authorities, Power station and Engineering. Thank you to Chaplains, Trustees and Members of the Operations Group as well as individuals and sponsoring denominations for all their support in prayer and in giving.

We continue to be open to new initiatives offering workplace chaplaincy opportunities, new people seeking to be chaplains and developing links with those serving in other areas of chaplaincy including theatre, sport, or other contexts. Do be in touch with the KWM office if you would like to know more.



KWM is a community of Christians from different denominations.  
who are committed to living out Jesus' discipleship in the workplaces of Kent.

By the end of 2023 Kent Workplace Mission had 59 chaplains serving a variety of workplaces across Kent, some working individually, others as part of a team.

The locations where KWM chaplains serve are varied and include:  
shopping centres, large transport hubs and a power station.

### **Locations of KWM chaplains:**

Ashford Designer Outlet & ASDA	Bexleyheath	Bluewater, Dartford
Dungeness B Power Station	Eurotunnel, Folkestone	Gravesham Borough Council
Medway Council, Chatham	Penge and Anerley	Port of Dover
Royal Victoria Place, Tunbridge Wells		



## Weekly Fellowship

Our online Weekly Fellowship continues to gather on Wednesdays 10am -11am. We facilitate chaplains and supporters to share in reflective Bible reading and prayer. The access details are uploaded to the website, and everyone is welcome to join any time:

[https://www.kentworkplacemission.org/page-weekly\\_fellowship.html](https://www.kentworkplacemission.org/page-weekly_fellowship.html)



## Co-ordinating Chaplain Report - *Penny Culliford*

When I started at the beginning of April 2023, I intended to “hit the ground running”. Unfortunately, I just hit the ground and broke my ankle, meaning I had to work mainly from home from the start of May to the start of July. However, it did allow me to complete training, read policies and spend time praying as well as setting up visits to all the large chaplaincy teams at Dover, Ashford, Tunbridge Wells and Bexleyheath, as well as the smaller ones in Annerley and at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. I completed these visits in the summer and autumn. It was extremely interesting to see how differently the teams worked and yet the common thread of pastoral care, confidential listening and a warm welcoming presence, supported with a foundation of prayer and the love of Jesus was evident in each. I plan to catch up with the last few individuals in the coming months.

David Slater and I have reviewed and updated our recruitment and training policies, giving greater emphasis to safer recruitment practises and safeguarding. Although it may have led to more administrative processes being put in place, in the long term it will help ensure that standards are being met and those being served by the chaplains are offered the best and safest possible provision.

In addition to our website, KWM now has a presence on social media – Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). This allows us to keep in touch with those interested in our chaplaincy provision, to advertise ourselves, to support our supporters by passing on their messages, and to be a positive Christian influence on the internet.

In the coming year we hope to focus on training, which will include Media Training for Chaplains, a Training Day and a Quiet Day to encourage and bless our chaplains and supporters. We also plan to be involved in a radio Lent course, which will focus on chaplaincy teams in the Kent, Surrey and Sussex area. We are also updating our popular Christ the Worker resources to allow chaplains and church congregations to bless those who work for us and understand the theological significance of work. The resources will be available through our website.

We are blessed to be in a season of growth, with new chaplains, new teams and requests from workplaces that recognise the benefits of chaplaincy to their workforce. The opportunity to walk alongside; pray for, and sometimes with; to share a coffee and ask, “How is your week going?” never grows old. We thank God for the privilege of being chaplains in the workplaces of Kent.

## Here follows reports from some of our chaplains from 2023 supported by Kent Workplace Mission.



### Ashford ASDA

#### *Chaplain: Joy Brumwell*

Because of a change in my circumstances, I am able only to visit the store once a week, usually on a Tuesday morning which restricts the number of colleagues I see. However, most of those people have worked there for many years and a good relationship has developed between us. With my 'Listening Ear' I get to hear about aches and pains, sick relatives and friends and how the workplace conditions have changed with the company's new owners. Prayer is offered or requested when it seems appropriate. This is appreciated.

The one initiative which has upset, mainly, older customers is the 'Reward System' which requires the use of a Smart Phone. Colleagues had to bear the complaints expressed by non-Smart Phone owners. I contacted head office on their behalf but never received a reply.

One moment I shall never forget is getting a hug from one of the Ukrainian employees when I told her one of my ex-foster children had spent a year taking medical supplies into Ukraine. It was a humbling experience.



### Ashford Outlet Centre

#### *Chaplain: Kevin Taylor*

Although during my ministry as a Methodist presbyter I had many pastoral encounters and previously some difficult conversations with potential suicides and hostage takers in my police work, my ministry as part of a workplace chaplaincy group has been a fascinating and steep 'learning curve' for me. I am so grateful to have been granted this opportunity.

I work with a lovely, selflessly dedicated team of people from whom I have already learned much and with whom, in a relatively short time, I have developed camaraderie from which I draw much encouragement in what is (to me) a new field of pastoral work.

My unofficial 'team companion' is my 2-year-old rescue Labrador Ben, who has twice so far been an 'emotional bridge' for people who feel awkward about speaking directly to another person when feeling upset. I have registered my interest for one of the online training courses later this year and I look forward to gleaning even more useful advice and guidance from those who have far greater knowledge and experience in this field.

My thanks to KWM for being patient enough to let me learn as I work and to develop my own strategies for the variety of challenges that this ministry entails.



## Bexleyheath Town Centre

### *Chaplain: Marilyn Ormes*

Bexleyheath Town Centre Chaplaincy is expanding! Well, only a little, but it's a start. We were sorry to say goodbye to Jane last September. She was our oldest serving chaplain and felt the time had come for her ministry to change direction (she is now heavily involved in visiting housebound church members). Jennie and Marilyn struggled on for a while without her and were overjoyed when Vicky agreed to join our team. Hopefully we will soon be able to expand the number of shops we visit.

And then more good news! Dorothy offered to join us and will be helping John with his chaplaincy in ASDA. We are especially pleased to welcome Dorothy as she is the first member of our team who doesn't worship at Christ Church Bexleyheath. Dorothy is a member of the Bexley Christian Life Centre and heard about the chaplaincy at a meeting of Churches Together in Bexleyheath.

Last November we entered the Chaplaincy for the Bexley Interfaith Forum Faith Awards. These awards celebrate the work being done by faith communities across the London Borough of Bexley. Although we didn't win, it was an opportunity to publicise chaplaincy – and maybe better luck next year!



## Birbeck and Anerley

### *Chaplain: Jeff Hawthorne*

The Lord's blessing on the chaplaincy has continued this year, including some wonderful projects with the local community. Particularly exciting was the Bethlehem Peace Light, a candle which is an uninterrupted flame originally lit from the Nativity Grotto in Bethlehem as a symbol of peace, light and hope at Christmas (details: [www.peacelight.org.uk](http://www.peacelight.org.uk)). The Peace Light was very well received by all the local shops and businesses on its tour, including the tattoo shop, crematorium, local food outlets and community halls. It sparked curiosity and discussions wherever it went, such as how it managed to get to Birkbeck from Bethlehem and the meaning of the Christmas message, helping deepen the relationships I had already made with the people I visit. It made an interesting first meeting with the new Aldi manager and got me a lunch invite at another church. The wider community also really enjoyed my daily Peace Light visit updates on local Facebook groups which also gave our local businesses some well-deserved publicity.

Other events included the ecumenical Way of the Cross Easter service in the nearby Betts Park, promoted by the Friends of the park and attended by the Mayor of Bromley. About sixty people came from local churches and the community as we carried a large cross around the park, stopping to remember the scriptural Stations of the Cross with Bible readings and prayers.



Betts Park also hosted our second Light in the Darkness service in December, and I was told there had been no reported crimes in the park since the same service last year.



Jeff taking the Peace Light from Bethlehem around his patch in Anerley

The local businesses continue to look forward to my weekly visits and occasional cards and packets of sunflower seeds. I have also been writing references in support of the local nursery's planning permission and the work of the local community hall which has been threatened with closure. I am always amazed at how God's Spirit seems to work in regularly bringing about the right meetings and conversations at the right time. A big thank you again to the local churches and the KWM team for all their support.





## Bluewater

### *Lead Chaplain Bluewater and Co-ordinating Chaplain – Penny Culliford*

It has been a privilege to get to know the team at Bluewater, our longest established shopping centre chaplaincy. With two of the team leaving to pursue new opportunities, two new chaplains joining and one previous chaplain returning, it has been a busy time.

At Christmas we offered a “Quiet Space” to escape to do mindful Christian activities and to write prayers to hang on our prayer tree. It has been great to support the retailers and staff, but we also received a lovely email from a gentleman who was shopping with his wife who suffered from health conditions. She had become overwhelmed and needed to sit somewhere quiet. Together with retail staff, we stayed with her while the gentleman brought the car nearer. We continue to remember them both in our prayers.

In November, the Bluewater chaplaincy team was visited by the Chairman of Kent County Council who came to talk to the chaplains and see how the Place of Quiet operated, particularly in welcoming guests of all faiths and world views.

Surprisingly perhaps, a number of people choose to remember their loved ones who have died with a plaque at the Nature Trail at Bluewater. It has been an honour to hear their stories and see what an important part of their lives the nature trail is. It has beautiful lakes, wildlife and is never far from the sound of children playing. We are hoping to install a bespoke wooden sculpture for memorial plaques in the future. It has been a privilege to offer pastoral care to them in this way.



Some members of the Bluewater Chaplaincy and their partners enjoying a Christmas get-together including:

Penny Culliford (Coordinating Chaplain), Jan Foreman, Dave Green, Mike Dale, Andrew Olowu, Mary Olowu and Joyce Fadeyi.

## Chaplain – Jan Foreman

I began Bluewater chaplaincy on a temporary basis back in 2008 as a placement. I felt called to remain to be part of the team and serve those that serve others in a lovely place to work. I served on both Upper and Lower Guildhall and after some years just Lower Guildhall. After a break due to health reasons, I felt called to serve again and found Upper Guildhall to be my setting. I hope to make connections once more, be a good listening ear and be able to support as God calls us to be in the world as visible signs of his immense love for us all.



**Port of Dover  
(PoD)**

**Eurotunnel  
(ET)**

**Kent Emergency Chaplains  
Scheme (KECS)**

## Dover Port Chaplaincy

### Lead Chaplain PoD: Canon David Slater

Regular Chaplaincy visits to offices and ships have continued this year, but many individuals are still working from home, many areas have downsized, and enhanced fire regulations have meant more logging in and out of some offices to keep numbers within limits.

Traffic levels have recovered but travellers are tending to stay in their cars, reducing the opportunities for interactions.

The good news has been the appointment, in July, of Major Richard Oliver by the Salvation Army to spend half his time running their congregation in Folkestone, but the other 50% as chaplain in Dover and Folkestone with a view to developing new opportunities with Kent Workplace Mission in East Kent. Richard's appointment is taking a lot of pressure off me personally.

Support to the crews of cargo ships has been very ably managed by Rev John Fogarty and Mike Fitzpatrick working with the Roman Catholic Stella Maris Mission. Unfortunately, John has been transferred by his bishop to be a prison chaplain but hopefully there will be a replacement in the spring of 2024.

The team is currently down to seven, a mixture of Anglicans, Catholics, and Salvation Army. We would welcome any new volunteers, especially from other denominations, and particularly with a maritime background to be ship visitors.

The port is still getting trainee ordinands whose courses require exposure to non-church settings, as we are one of the few opportunities that isn't a hospital or prison.

Dover's reputation for tours to show church leaders frontline chaplaincy continues with visits including the Archdeacon of Canterbury, a Past Moderator of the URC and the Chair of the Methodist South East District.

We provided the usual round of Services such as Herald of Free Enterprise memorial (reduced, but still reading the roll of those lost), Sea Sunday, Merchant Navy Day and the Port Remembrance Service. Preparations are in hand for some of these in 2024, including a Royal British Legion parade remembering the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.

These events are for large numbers, but large numbers of individuals with their own stories, I had a long chat with a Belgian diver who had been on the wreck of the Herald – he still



comes to Dover for the anniversary.

Although the proposed additional EU controls were not introduced in 2023, they are still expected next autumn (after the Paris Olympics) which is likely to result in long delays, passengers stuck in jams and staff highly stressed. The decision of Eurotunnel to reduce their capacity for coaches pushed many to Dover and caused us some stressful periods. The strike by Eurotunnel staff in France just before Christmas also caused big tailbacks, hurting passengers and staff.

Dealing with the incoming migrants still poses a problem, and the RNLI are still getting many calls. Although chaplains and other faith groups are excluded from Border Force areas directly, I was asked to contribute to a series of sessions trying to get a prayer space set up at Manston.

Links with Workplace Mission UK, the South East Port Welfare Committee of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB), Kent Voluntary Sector Emergency Group and Kent Workplace Mission continue, many of the more distant ones by Zoom.

We still hope to get a retail chaplaincy going, but getting key people together has proved difficult. No doubt, with the Lord's timing, it will come to fruition in due course.

In November I was appointed a Lay Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, citing my chaplaincy work at Dover and Eurotunnel. I regard this very much as recognition for the team, who are there to take the church and Christ to the travellers and workers in the Port.



## Eurotunnel - Le Shuttle Chaplaincy

### Lead Chaplain ET, Folkestone: Canon David Slater

The appointment of Richard Oliver, thanks to the generosity of the Salvation Army (see Port of Dover report), has made my life considerably easier although getting a second person through the approval and vetting process is not an easy or a rapid undertaking.

From appointment in July it took to September before Richard could get on-site on his own.

The result is that Eurotunnel are getting at least three times the visits I used to be able to achieve.

Visits are following the traditional pattern, helped as more return from 'Working from Home' but the cost-of-living crisis is meaning that traffic volumes are not as great as hoped and as staff leave, they are not always replaced, adding to the burdens of their colleagues. Individuals are often moved to other locations at short notice, adding their stress (and mine when I try and find them).

One casualty of the cuts were the school and church groups who used to come in to sing carols to staff and travellers at Christmas, there is no longer someone to get them through security.

On a more positive note, one of the environmental team has gone part time as he studies for ordination – so there can be three of us on site now. Another positive is the inclusion of the chaplain in the Folkestone church leaders' group and our inclusion in the rota to lead staff prayers for the Rainbow Centre – the hub for church community outreach in the area.

Eurotunnel was always half French, and operationally that is increasing in some areas. The nature of the tunnel means that everything must be operating together and so the strike by French staff just before Christmas stopped everything. As a French company we cannot legally have a conversation about religion with anyone on a French contract, but they are happy we wear hi-vis jackets with a cross on the front and 'CHAPLAIN' in 4" letters on the back – and so if anyone says 'what is a chaplain' or 'how long have we had a chaplain' then they started it and we can respond.



## Rochester Lay Ministry Conference

### Chaplains Marilyn Ormes and Jeff Hawthorn and Trustee Ellen Couzens

This conference was attended by lay ministers from all over Rochester Diocese. KWM chaplains were invited to speak about retail chaplaincy. Ellen Couzens (below in white) one of our trustees, introduced the session and then Marilyn Ormes and Jeff Hawthorn spoke about the chaplaincies in Bexleyheath and Anerley. They spoke about the range of shops they minister to and how the people who work in those shops in turn minister to their customers.

Ellen donned the white outfit you see in the picture and everyone present was asked to guess which type of business she was representing. The favourite suggestion was a shop selling bridal gowns – there was surprise and laughter when the real answer was revealed – an undertaker!

Sometimes chaplaincy takes us further than the shops. Jeff had organised an ecumenical service of blessing – Light in the Darkness – in a park where there had been two murders. This was really significant to the local community and the father of one of the victims took part.

This was such an opportunity to share news about chaplaincy and hopefully to sow the seeds for more lay people to share in this ministry.



Jeff, Ellen and Marilyn giving their talk





## Royal Victoria Place, Tunbridge Wells

### Chaplain – Tony Fitzpatrick

As one of the Chaplains who launched at RVP shopping centre in Tunbridge Wells in May 2023, it has been a privilege to engage with those working in the outlets with a friendly face and listening ear.

This has proven to be a valuable service with some relationships established from the start and many others built over a period of time, but as one of my outlets is a large employer within the centre there are still a number of employees that I haven't even met yet, so hopefully this will be built upon in 2024.

A particularly encouraging element from the early visits, is that all outlets with a staff room agreed to hang a poster explaining who we are with our photos and contact details.

### Chaplain – Captain Zoe Smith

This year I rediscovered the joy of retail chaplaincy as I returned after six years but in a new location. Together with others, I've been privileged to help launch the new project in Tunbridge Wells town centre and it's been wonderful to be back out serving others in this way.

Throughout the past seven months I've been able to introduce and explain how chaplaincy works to many people and begun to form new relationships with the staff in Royal Victoria Place. During my visits I've been able to be a listening ear to people going through the best and worst of times; times when we've talked about the seemingly mundane but other occasions where God has clearly placed me there at that moment for a specific reason.

At Christmas as I was delivering Christmas cards, it became real to me that 12 months ago I didn't know these people, and whilst there are still many I have to meet, I was so blessed to walk in, be greeted with a smile and to wish them a Happy Christmas.

I look forward to seeing what God has in store for us in Tunbridge Wells in 2024, where we hope to expand the team and the areas in which we are serving. God continues to bless us richly.



Tony and Zoe on their rounds





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