

Chaplaincy *Times*



Team Chaplain Susie Parsons and her husband Brian nearly lost their lives last year in a major traffic accident. Susie reflects on what it is like to be on the

Other side of the sheets.....

When I began a long placement with the team last year I was so excited. I shadowed different volunteers and clergy until it was deemed safe to let me lose on the in patients and staff. It never failed to amaze me that I was always guided to the right person who needed to have someone listen to them, or another who was in need of a prayer. For doing so little on my part, I couldn't get over just how much I also received in return.

In the middle of my placement Brian and I went on holiday and, half an hour from our destination on the A1 North just past Newcastle, we were hit head on by a driver heading the wrong way down the dual carriage way. It was an horrific accident that caused very serious injuries to my husband and myself. (Nelson our dog survived.)

Now the tables were turned. I had a husband not expected to live in ITU and me on a neuro ward with 2 stable fractures to my neck, lower back and finger, not to mention other horrific bruising.

In a hospital bed a long way from home trussed up like a chicken in back and neck braces what happened? The medical, nursing, volunteers, cleaners, porters, clerical staff, etc. all happened. Making me laugh, bed bathing and showering me, keeping me out of pain - everything you would expect but they also listened and the chaplains prayed and I felt safe in the knowledge that what ever happened to us God was with us and everyone else at this really challenging time.

All of this didn't surprise me because that's where I have always found God's love at work. In the middle of all the most perplexing moments of our lives and he was using those around us to be there for one another. Now back after 6 months at MPH I see it happening here on a daily basis.



Volunteer Recruits Receive Training



We are delighted that we have three volunteers who have almost completed their training and three others exploring with us. During the recent training Karen Holden our specialist in care of the elderly and dementia shared some of her knowledge with us, which was very informative. She has also invited our volunteers to contribute to a piece of work she is working on about dementia. We are looking forward to our Commissioning service and an 'away day' which will enable us together to catch up with each other as well as with God. If you would like to explore volunteering please contact **Judith Lawrence on 01823 342515**



Volunteer Focus

Mike Bristow makes weekly visits to Barrington Ward and has been a volunteer chaplain for six years. The 'Times' asked him why?

"When patients realise that a visitor is truly listening they usually talk about the more interesting bits of their lives. Such conversations can give brief insights into the wealth of experience and character of the patients. Often, the hospital situation, the pressures of illness and a willing listener invite spiritual discussion and add a dimension normally absent from chance encounters in the pub or over the garden fence. A smile or lightening of mood after a chat about spirituality, prayer, or Bible reading often increase the value of these encounters. This is why I hope to continue volunteering."

Fulfilling haste

Sunday morning is always a busy time for the chaplains and members of the volunteer team. Four or five chaplains cover every ward in the hospital taking communion to those who have pre-booked these as well as those the wards have nominated via the 'blue' forms. The morning continues apace with a broadcast service from the hospital Chapel. Such frenetic activity would suggest that the work is unfulfilling, but not so says Team Chaplain Steven Reed. "Giving a personal bedside communion is very precious for the chaplain and patient and although lasting just a few brief minutes there is something of eternal value which has been achieved, leaving both inwardly satisfied" says Steven. Following a well-earned coffee our work concludes at lunchtime, although one of the team will be actively 'on call' till the following morning.

Baby loss made less traumatic

Apart from a time at Sunday School, 'Beth'+ did not claim to be 'up-to-date in the faith department' as she put it. However, having suffered a miscarriage she said 'yes' to a visit by the chaplain whilst in MPH and was pleased that she did. The hospital has a very effective baby loss support system in place which assists the parents to gain closure from their loss. Having received all the relevant information from staff about the arrangements for burial in the Baby Memorial Garden, the visit by the chaplain proved comforting and informative and that made the loss less traumatic. + not real name



Chapel refresh

The Chapel of the Tree of Life on Level 1 in the Duchess Building is a special place - each day visitors pop in to rest a while from the noise and bustle. To improve the ambience and to use the area more flexibly the chairs are being replaced by lighter stackable seating. This project is being funded out of chaplaincy donated funds. If you would like to help defray the cost of this project, you can do so in two ways: by sponsoring a chair in the name of a loved one or by finding a home for one (or some) of the current chairs, which date from the original chapel on the site. **Speak to Viv Henderson**



Staff Prayers

Staff meet for prayers on Tuesdays at 1.00pm in the Chapel. Weekday prayers are also said in the chapel each morning at 8.45am.

Compassion

What a lovely thing it is -
A heart that's warm and kind,
One filled with compassion
That soothes the troubled mind.
A heart that's all forgiving
And always understands,
One who goes the second mile
And never makes demands.
Many hearts grow cold and hard
From knocks upon life's way,
And others lack compassion
In the world today.
Always trim your lamp of love
And keep the flame alight -
For the heart filled with
compassion
Is precious in God's sight
Kathleen Gillum