Miranda Threlfall-Holmes is chaplain and Solway Fellow of University College, Durham. After a degree in history at Cambridge she first worked in brand management, then studied for a doctorate in medieval history at Durham University, lectured part-time at Newcastle University and was a lay volunteer chaplain at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle. She trained for ordination at Cranmer Hall in Durham and was a curate at a parish in Heaton. She has been involved in ordination and lay theological training in Durham and Newcastle dioceses for several years: teaching essay-writing skills to adult returners to education, tutoring Church history to trainee readers and ordained local ministers, and being a placement supervisor to ordinands exploring university chaplaincy. As a historian and a theologian she has written and published extensively in both the academic and popular media. Her doctoral thesis, Monks and Markets: Durham Cathedral Priory 1460–1520, was published by Oxford University Press in 2005 and she has contributed to the Church Times, The Guardian and Reuters.

Mark Newitt is a hospital chaplain in Sheffield. Since his first degree in pharmaceutical management he has maintained an interest in healthcare, ethics and spirituality. He is particularly interested in the work of chaplaincy within neonatal and maternity units and is currently studying for a doctorate in theology and ministry through Durham University, investigating the benefit of chaplaincy support to bereaved parents following the death of a baby. A member of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics, he trained for ordination at Cranmer Hall in Durham and was a curate in Northampton before taking up his current post. He has published articles on his work in both the British Medical Journal and Practical Theology.
SPCK Library of Ministry

Being a Chaplain
_Miranda Threlfall-Holmes and Mark Newitt_

Community and Ministry: An introduction to community development in a Christian context
_Paul Ballard and Lesley Husselbee_

How to Make Great Appointments in the Church:
Calling, Competence and Chemistry
_Claire Pedrick and Su Blanch_

Pioneer Ministry and Fresh Expressions of Church
_Angela Shier-Jones_

Reader Ministry Explored
_Cathy Rowling and Paula Gooder_

Reflective Caring: Imaginative listening to pastoral experience
_Bob Whorton_

Skills for Collaborative Ministry
_Sally Nash, Jo Pimlott and Paul Nash_

Supporting Dying Children and Their Families: A handbook for Christian ministry
_Paul Nash_

Supporting New Ministers in the Local Church:
A handbook
_Keith Lamdin and David Tilley_

Tools for Reflective Ministry
_Sally Nash and Paul Nash_

Youth Ministry: A multi-faceted approach
_Sally Nash_
Contents

List of contributors viii
Acknowledgements xii
Introduction by Miranda Threlfall-Holmes and Mark Newitt xiii

Part 1
CHAPLAINS’ STORIES – THE ARMED FORCES

1 The RAF 3
   Ruth Hake
2 The Army 7
   Stephen Robbins
3 The Royal Navy 9
   David Simpson

Part 2
CHAPLAINS’ STORIES – EDUCATION

4 Durham School 15
   Anna de Lange
5 The Grey Coat Hospital and Westminster City School 18
   Garry Swinton
6 A further-education college 21
   Clare McBeath
7 Sunderland University 24
   Stephen Fagbemi
8 Sheffield Hallam University 27
   Ian Maher
9 Selwyn and Newnham Colleges, Cambridge 30
   Hugh Shilson-Thomas
10 King’s College London 34
    Jane Speck
Contents

Part 3
CHAPLAINS’ STORIES – HEALTHCARE

11 Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust 39
   Joan Ashton
12 The Rowans Hospice 43
   Lance Blake
13 Sheffield Children’s NHS Foundation Trust 47
   Bill Burleigh
14 Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust 50
   Nigel Goodfellow
15 Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust 54
   Charles Thody

Part 4
CHAPLAINS’ STORIES – THE PRISON SERVICE

16 HMP Wandsworth 59
   Tim Bryan
17 HMP Wakefield 63
   Dawn Colley
18 HMP Low Newton 67
   Dana Delap
19 HMPs Acklington and Castington 71
   Chris Hughes

Part 5
CHAPLAINS’ STORIES – OTHER SECTORS

20 London Luton Airport 77
   Michael Banfield
21 Manchester United FC 81
   John Boyers
22 Community arts in Bensham and Gateshead 84
   Jim Craig
Contents

Part 6
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

23 Responding to diversity: chaplaincy in a multi-faith context 89
   Andrew Todd

24 The role and skills of a chaplain 103
   Mark Newitt

25 Exploring models of chaplaincy 116
   Miranda Threlfall-Holmes

26 Values and tensions 127
   Miranda Threlfall-Holmes
Contributors

**Joan Ashton** (full-time, Anglican priest) worked for 14 years in local government housing management before being ordained in 1993. She has been employed in acute sector healthcare chaplaincy for 12 years, the past 6 as coordinator of chaplaincy services for the Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust and the Rotherham Hospice. She has recently completed a degree in supportive and palliative care at Sheffield Hallam University, in which she focused on the provision of spiritual care within this field of healthcare.

**Michael Banfield** (full-time, Baptist minister) is senior chaplain at London Luton Airport and senior vice-president, International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains – [www.iacac.ws](http://www.iacac.ws). He is supported equally by the airport operating company and the churches ecumenically through Workplace Ministry – [www.workplaceministry.org.uk](http://www.workplaceministry.org.uk).

**Lance Blake** (full-time, lay Anglican) has been chaplain at the Rowans Hospice in Portsmouth for the last 11 years. His spiritual journey has centred around the healing ministry in one form or another for the past 40 years, during which time he joined the Franciscan Order. He was instrumental in preparation of the ‘Standards for Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplaincy’ for the Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains and worked with the College of Healthcare Chaplains to help form the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplains. He holds a masters degree in chaplaincy and spiritual direction.

**John Boyers** (part-time, Baptist minister) is the founder and international director of Sports Chaplains Offering Resources and Encouragement (SCORE), a UK-based charity that works interdenominationally to bring quality chaplaincy to the world of sport – [www.scorechaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.scorechaplaincy.org.uk). He began his chaplaincy work with Watford FC and is now chaplain to Manchester United FC.

**Tim Bryan** (full-time, Anglican priest) was ordained in 1997 while still serving in the Metropolitan Police. After specializing in the investigation of child abuse and setting up national public protection systems, he joined the Prison Service as a resettlement chaplain. In 2008 he became the coordinating chaplain at HMP Wandsworth.

**Bill Burleigh** (part-time, Roman Catholic deacon) was ordained in 2001 while still a full-time senior civil servant in the Department of Health. Having retired early in 2005 he completed a masters degree in theology
Contributors

...and ministry at Durham University and added chaplaincy to his portfolio of parish and diocesan work.

Dawn Colley (full-time, Methodist minister) is an ecumenical chaplain at HMP Wakefield, a high-security men’s prison. Previously she served as a minister in the Leeds Circuit and as a Free Church chaplain at HMP Newhall. Theologically she trained at Durham University, where she has recently completed doctoral research exploring the role of the chaplain with regard to self-harm among female prisoners.

Jim Craig (full-time, Anglican priest) studied fine art at the University of Humberside and the Open University. He trained for ordination at Cranmer Hall in Durham and served his curacy in Stanley in County Durham. Jim was appointed to his current post as community arts chaplain in Bensham and Gateshead in January 2005. He is the only full-time arts chaplain in the Church of England.

Anna de Lange (part-time, lay Anglican) is chaplain to Durham School and a Reader in Durham diocese. She has a background in administration (having worked as a librarian and a church administrator) and in liturgy (having served for five years on General Synod and the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England). She is a member of the diocesan liturgical committee and of the Group for the Renewal of Worship, and encourages greater participation of lay people in the leadership of worship by leading training events and writing Grove booklets.

Dana Delap (part-time, lay Anglican) was a chaplain at HMP Low Newton and a Reader in Durham diocese until 2009, when she left to train for ordination. She has been a member of General Synod and of the Liturgical Commission for ten years, latterly as vice-chair of the Commission.

Stephen Fagbemi (full-time, Anglican priest) is coordinating and Anglican chaplain at Sunderland University and associate priest at Sunderland Minster. After his theological education and ordination in Nigeria he studied at Nottingham University and later at the University of Kent, Canterbury, where he obtained his doctorate specializing in New Testament and applied theology.

Nigel Goodfellow (full-time, URC minister) was ordained in 1983. He became a chaplain in 1992 and in 2005 the Trust head of chaplaincy, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust. An independent assessor for the Human Tissue Authority, his interests lie in medical ethics, critical care, transplantation and paediatrics. He is a visiting lecturer and doctoral student with the Centre for Chaplaincy Studies based at St Michael’s College in Llandaff, Cardiff.
Ruth Hake (full-time, Anglican priest) was ordained in 2002. She served her title post at St Michael le Belfrey in York, during which time she was also a Territorial Army chaplain. She joined the RAF as a chaplain in 2005. She is currently force chaplain, British Forces South Atlantic Islands, based in the Falkland Islands.

Chris Hughes (part-time, Roman Catholic priest) is a sessional chaplain to HMPs Acklington and Castington. A priest in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, previously he was pastoral director at Ushaw College. He has been chaplain to a mental-health trust, a hospice, a comprehensive school, Newcastle College, Northumbria and Newcastle Universities, L’Arche, the Student Cross Pilgrimage and even a football tournament – Euro 96.

Clare McBeath (full-time job share, Baptist minister) worked for two years as multi-faith chaplain in a large further-education institution in a northern city. She is currently minister of Openshaw Baptist Tabernacle in East Manchester. She has a doctorate in contextual theologies and is a non-executive director of Manchester Mental Health and Social Care NHS Trust. She has been engaged in local regeneration as chair of the Health and Well-Being Programme, as a local school governor and as vice-chair of Brook Manchester. Clare is co-author of Crumbs of Hope: Prayers from the City (Peterborough: Inspire, 2006) and of the Dancing Scarecrow worship-resource website – <www.dancingscarecrow.org.uk>.

Ian Maher (full-time, Anglican Church Army evangelist). Since January 2006 he has been the multi-faith chaplaincy coordinator at Sheffield Hallam University. In previous posts he has been head of academic programmes at Wilson Carlile College of Evangelism, Sheffield, where he also taught ethics and world religions; national coordinator of the ecumenical Certificate in Evangelism Studies; and a parish evangelist in south-east London. He has also written extensively about film.

Stephen Robbins (full-time, Anglican priest) trained at King’s College London and St Augustine’s College, Canterbury, and then worked in parishes in Durham diocese for 11 years before becoming a forces chaplain in 1987. His career since then has been within the forces, including a time as chaplain of the Royal Memorial Chapel, Sandhurst. He is currently Chaplain General Land Forces and Archdeacon for the Army.

Hugh Shilson-Thomas (full-time, Anglican priest) is dean of chapel and chaplain at Selwyn College and chaplain and director of Studies in Theology at Newnham College, Cambridge University. After chaplaincies at Kingston University and Robinson College, Cambridge, and a masters
Contributors

degree at King’s College London, he was appointed as the Church of England’s national adviser for higher education and chaplaincy, a post he held for five years before leaving to take up his current posts in 2008.

David Simpson (full-time, Anglican priest) was previously Anglican chaplain at the University of Southampton (1997–2005). He joined the Royal Navy in 2005.

Jane Speck (part-time, Anglican priest) is chaplain to King’s College London and assistant priest in the North Lambeth parish. She previously worked in parishes in Worcester diocese and is a member of the Iona Community.

Garry Swinton (full-time, Anglican priest) has since 2001 been chaplain in two inner-London church schools: the Grey Coat Hospital, a girls’ Church of England comprehensive school, and Westminster City School, a non-denominational church school for boys. He is also priest vicar at St Margaret’s Church Westminster Abbey. Before ordination Garry taught religious education in Essex. He has been a parish priest in Surbiton, succentor of Southwark Cathedral, priest in charge of St Faith’s Wandsworth and chaplain to Wimbledon YMCA.

Charles Thody (full-time, Anglican priest) is head of chaplaincy for the Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. Prior to being appointed to this role he was chaplaincy team manager at Rampton High Security Hospital, where he had a particular interest in dangerous and severe personality disorders.

Andrew Todd is director of the Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies (Cardiff University and St Michael’s College). He has 16 years’ experience of theological education and has also been a chaplain in higher education and sub-dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral. He is a practical theologian with particular interests in chaplaincy, public theology, hermeneutics and research methods. His publications include a number of articles on military chaplaincy.

(Editors’ note: the descriptions ‘full-time’ and ‘part-time’ used above relate to the contributors’ chaplaincy employment only.)
Acknowledgements

The editors gratefully acknowledge the help and support of innumerable colleagues and friends in the conception and writing of this book. First, our thanks must go to our colleagues in our workplaces, Durham University and Sheffield Hospitals, for valuable conversations about what we are doing as chaplains and what our institutions are employing us for, which led to the idea for this book. Particular mention must go to Paula Stirling, Eva Schumacher-Reid, Kate Bruce, Jenny Moberly, Anthony Bash and Jonathan Lawson at Durham; and Mark Cobb, Martin Kerry and Judith Daley at Sheffield. Second, we are extremely grateful to all the chaplains represented here, who willingly gave their time to write up their experiences to share with others. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the help received from all those who have read and commented on the manuscript, particularly Rob Lawrence and Ken Newitt, who read the whole draft, and from the editorial team at SPCK.
Introduction

MIRANDA THRELFAF-HOLMES
and MARK NEWITT

Introduction

Chaplaincies are a major part of the mission and ministry of Christian churches and are increasingly being valued and entered into by members of other faiths. There remains, however, little common reflection and analysis about what chaplaincy is, what a chaplain might be expected to do and whether and why it is important. This book aims to help chaplains and those considering chaplaincy or ministry more generally to reflect upon these questions and the very varied contexts in which chaplains operate.

Following this initial chapter, which briefly surveys the rapidly changing context in which chaplaincy operates and goes on to discuss the concept of ‘marginality’, the book is divided into several parts. The first five collect together 22 stories from those engaged in chaplaincy in a variety of contexts. The focus is on the major areas in which chaplains are employed, and takes a deliberately multi-vocal approach. Each broad category of chaplaincy (armed forces, education, healthcare and prisons) is represented by several contributors working in different contexts. There are also contributions from chaplains in airport, sports and arts chaplaincy. While the majority are Anglican, this collection also includes Methodist, Baptist, URC and Roman Catholic contributors. In addition lay and ordained chaplains are represented and several of the contributors work in or coordinate multi-faith teams. This variety illustrates the breadth and diversity of roles that exist within the umbrella title of ‘chaplaincy’ and also allows common themes to emerge.

Finally, Part 6 consists of four chapters of theological reflections on specific aspects of chaplaincy. For the first, Chapter 23, we invited Andrew Todd to consider multi-faith chaplaincy. He outlines some of the reasons for its development, explores how three areas of public sector chaplaincy have responded and discusses the implications these reactions raise for the future of chaplaincy. In the remaining three chapters of Part 6 the editors, drawing on all that has been before, offer further reflection. Hence Chapter 24 analyses the role(s) that a chaplain fills and the key skills needed by chaplains across the range of institutional contexts in which they minister. Chapter 25 goes on to discuss models of chaplaincy held
both by chaplains and also, crucially, by those institutions employing them. Finally, in Chapter 26 issues around institutional values are identified and the tensions delineated in the chaplains’ stories are discussed.

The contemporary context

Over the last decade much has changed both in the Church and in the institutions in which chaplains minister. After September 11, the tensions and challenges between secular and faith perspectives are very much on the agenda of public and private institutions. Multi-faith chaplaincy is suddenly in vogue, but conflicting definitions and understandings of it exist. How such understandings are put into practice also varies widely. Meanwhile chaplains in institutions such as prisons and universities are increasingly being seen by government as on the front line of combating religious extremism.

Within the Church many of the tensions between chaplains and parochial clergy identified by Legood (1999) still exist. Indeed, in places they have been exacerbated by lack of funds and clergy ‘restructuring’ over the decade. In addition other, more subtle changes have occurred to the church context in which chaplaincy operates. For example, increasing numbers of dual-clergy households mean that chaplaincy can be a career choice that enables two ordained clergy each to receive pay for their work (Hancocks et al., 2008).

Against these changing backgrounds, chaplaincies themselves are a major area of ministry for the churches and other faiths. There are around 500 full-time and a further 3,000 part-time chaplains in the NHS in the UK (roughly half of these from the Church of England). Around 320 chaplains are employed in universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, with perhaps a further 1,000 voluntary associate university chaplains from other faiths and minority denominations. From the Church of England alone there are over 200 ordained chaplains employed by prisons and young-offender institutions. A further 160 are employed by the Army, Navy and Air Force. There are over 170 ordained Church of England chaplains in both private and state schools and many more schools with lay chaplains or a chaplain from another denomination. There are also chaplains at airports, theatres, shopping centres, sports clubs and so on. Through these latter roles many clergy combine part-time or honorary chaplaincy work with church responsibilities.

Ministry on the margins and in the midst

Chaplaincy, often labelled ‘sector ministry’ as though it only addresses a narrow facet of society, can be seen by the church hierarchy as not
just on but beyond the margins of church life proper. A typical view is that ‘the core business of the diocese . . . is the ministry of the parishes’, as Jackson (2005) declares, while suggesting that a diocese might save money for its ‘core business’ by cutting chaplaincy funding. Yet from another standpoint the picture looks very different. Chaplains are placed not in churches where people may or may not come looking for them but actually where people are. They are, to use Ballard’s (2009) helpful term, ‘embedded’ in prisons, schools, universities, hospitals, shopping centres, airports, workplaces, battlefields and barracks. There at the time they are wanted, on the spot, many chaplains are on call day and night. Chaplains may be marginal to the churches, but they are often in places where the 90 per cent of the UK population who do not regularly attend church will be found. In marketing terms, chaplains and chaplaincies are gold dust. Like an advertising slot in the middle of a world cup final, they give the Church an opportunity to engage with the unchurched or dechurched majority whom it would otherwise find hard to reach.

In the context of the increased focus on mission and outreach, of fresh expressions and ‘mission-shaped’ church, it seems perverse that chaplaincy remains so commonly characterized as marginal. In theological reflection on and discussions about chaplaincy, issues of marginality or liminality almost invariably arise. Furthermore, the terms ‘marginal’ and ‘liminal’ are often used interchangeably, with various distinct yet overlapping meanings that compound the problem. There are three primary ways in which these terms are used in the context of discussing chaplaincy, some more helpful than others. First, as noted above, the experience of being a chaplain can be one of marginalization. While this may be the case for any minister in our increasingly secular society, it can be doubly so for chaplains who find themselves marginal both to the institution to which they are chaplain and to the church from which they are sent.

Second, the value or distinctive nature of a chaplain’s ministry may be perceived as one of liminality – standing between heaven and earth, pointing out the existence of an alternative reality, embodying and being a threshold between the two. Used in this way the term derives from sociology and anthropology, often used of a shaman or similar religious figure. Chaplaincy is not distinct from other ministry in being conceived in terms of liminality. However, the nature of chaplaincy as embedded within a (usually non-religious) organization or institution emphasizes this aspect of the role. The chaplain’s very presence opens a doorway between two realms, or at least points to the existence of such a doorway. Images of liminality most obviously lend themselves to contexts such as hospice chaplaincy, the chaplain being seen as the one who helps people to confront and/or cross the threshold between life and
death. It can, though, be extended to other ‘thresholds’, such as adolescence/adulthood (education chaplaincy), freedom/imprisonment (prison chaplaincy) and so on.

Third, it can be argued that much chaplaincy occurs in marginal places. The major employers of chaplains – hospitals, prisons, universities, schools and the armed forces – are all places that are, to some extent, marginal to everyday life for those not immediately involved in them. However important and even central to our society such institutions may be, they hover on the edges of our consciousness until or unless they are forced upon our notice. Yet for those within these institutions, even if only temporarily, they provide an alternative reality. University students speak of the ‘bubble’ of university life – even as they travel from rented houses to lecture theatres, both set in the real world, they feel a disconnection, speaking of ‘real life’ as what lies outside the university. Being in hospital can create a similar experience – patients often feel that normal family and community life has been disrupted. Likewise members of the armed forces often struggle to adapt to life in Civvy Street. In these marginal places, chaplains are amid the very real life that goes on.

So what kind of ministry goes on in these places? An enormous variety, as the stories contained in this volume demonstrate. There are, though, common themes that emerge and that begin to demonstrate that these ‘marginal’ ministries are in fact very mainstream. Themes that emerge from the stories that follow include the importance of forging personal relationships, both in the institutional structures and with the more transient populations that pass through. The importance of both knowing people and being known, and of listening attentively and respectfully to people’s stories, is repeatedly stressed in the contributions.

Many of the chaplains writing here speak of their ministry as ‘incarnational’, emphasizing the theological as well as the practical importance of presence and relationships. The metaphor of journeying with people is also a recurring theme. Chaplaincy is above all a ministry of presence, of simply being there amid things – a sacramental ministry, not primarily in the ‘churchy’ sense of celebrating the sacraments but in the theological one of taking the everyday stuff of life and making it a sign of God’s presence and love. It is also an expectant ministry, waiting for opportunities to present themselves and expecting those opportunities to come.

Chaplains will not often get to follow the lives and careers of those they interact with at significant moments. We often only see people once or at most for a few years, and rarely get to see the seeds we have (it is hoped) planted, watered or tended come to fruition. Accordingly chaplains have to be extremely good at discernment – at discerning what the particular task at hand is, getting on with it and then accepting the
Introduction

next task that comes along. We have to be extremely good at setting boundaries in our own minds and at managing the expectations of others. Finally, we have to learn to live with the tension that comes from serving two masters and often being considered only marginally relevant by both.

Chaplaincy and church ministry

It is clear, therefore, that while chaplaincy has certain distinctive features that differentiate it from parochial ministry, most notably the more transient nature of the relationships that are formed and the population that is served, it is by no means essentially different from church and parish ministry. Furthermore, we would suggest that because chaplains serve in the world of work and are amid society outside of the church structures, their insights and experience are of key importance for the churches – chaplaincy may well be the canary in the mine for the churches’ relationship to society. Chaplains seem often to be facing the rapidly arising and changing issues in contemporary society more sharply and more quickly than the rest of the Church (Gilliat-Ray, 1999). Those whose stories are collected together here often describe a sense of alienation from the wider Church arising, at least in part, from the fast-moving and changing contexts in which they operate. Chaplains often have to formulate answers to questions the institutional churches have not yet begun to ask. Andrew Todd, in Chapter 23, discusses the ways in which chaplaincies have responded to the challenges of diversity in faith, individual philosophy and belief, and secular viewpoints. Models of ministry that arise from chaplaincy experience may well be precisely those to which other clergy will need to adapt in years to come.

Any discussion of chaplaincy therefore needs to take place within, and to contribute to, the wider context of the theology and practice of ministry more generally. Chaplains, whether lay or ordained, have a particularly visible and defined representative role within their institutions. They may variously articulate this as representing in themselves either the Church, God or the faith/spiritual dimension in that place. They are representative persons, set aside in some way. Being a chaplain carries with it a representative function and an ontological freight. For this reason, much of what is said about chaplaincy in this book should be read in conversation with the extensive literature on ministry and vocation. In turn, the experiences and reflections of chaplains in a wide variety of contexts that this book provides will shed light on some of the key issues in ministry and ministerial practice facing the wider Church.

It is notable that in much that is written on ministry more generally, ‘chaplaincy’ is often one of the models presented for this wider ministry.
Sometimes this is a positive model, but often its use is more negative. It has become commonplace to say that parish priests should not be mere chaplains to their congregations. In the context of the recent emphasis in all the mainstream churches upon mission and evangelism, where ‘mission-shaped church’ has become such a rallying cry, the point being made is that the focus of a minister’s work should be not on those who already belong to the church but on those who do not. The term ‘chaplain’ in this context is used to describe an overly limited role. Those with an evangelical background in particular may be suspicious that chaplaincy leaves no room for mission. Yet all the chaplains represented here speak of their ministry to the whole community in which they are situated. Being a chaplain is precisely the opposite of the overconcentration on the worshipping community that can sometimes be characterized by the term ‘chaplaincy’. Mission is a broad category and involves engaging with a community in terms and in ways that are fitting to the particular context. This is at the heart of how most chaplains describe their role.

Given the tensions and fears in the contemporary Church surrounding such issues as faith in public life and the role of the state in pressing forward an equality agenda, the delicate balancing act undertaken by most chaplains provides an important case study in how mission is possible in a secular environment. Billings (2010) has argued that the Church of England requires clergy who are prepared to accept the role of ‘chaplain to the nation’ and in so doing are prepared to relinquish being too quick to evangelize, too determined to draw boundaries around the membership of the church or acceptable behaviour, and prepared to welcome everyone in and – to some extent at least – give them what they want. This characterization of chaplaincy rings true with the stories told by many of the chaplains in this volume. There is in many quarters of the Church a siege mentality – a sense that the world is becoming a dangerously secular place and that the response of the churches must be to nail their colours to their masts and fight.

Yet the experiences of chaplaincy related here show, gloriously and optimistically, that this is by no means the only possible response. This new, aggressively secular world, in which values such as tolerance, equality, accountability and transparency are consistently expected to trump historic church tradition or belief, has been precisely the context in which chaplains have been operating cheerfully for decades. The ‘social contract’ implicit in the relationship between the churches and the nation has been explicitly spelt out in contracts, working agreements and policy documents in schools, hospitals, prisons and universities for some time. Chaplains work creatively and productively within these guidelines. The experiences of chaplains can, therefore, be of considerable help in
shaping the Church of the future and showing how faith and ministry can flourish in an explicitly secular and even, on occasion, hostile environment.

(In Parts 1–5 the names of people referred to have been changed to preserve anonymity.)

References


Billings, A. (2010), Making God Possible. London: SPCK.


Jackson, B. (2005), The Road to Growth: Towards a Thriving Church. London: Church House Publishing.

Contributors

Ruth Hake (full-time, Anglican priest) was ordained in 2002. She served her title post at St Michael le Belfrey in York, during which time she was also a Territorial Army chaplain. She joined the RAF as a chaplain in 2005. She is currently force chaplain, British Forces South Atlantic Islands, based in the Falkland Islands.

Chris Hughes (part-time, Roman Catholic priest) is a sessional chaplain to HMPs Acklington and Castington. A priest in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, previously he was pastoral director at Ushaw College. He has been chaplain to a mental-health trust, a hospice, a comprehensive school, Newcastle College, Northumbria and Newcastle Universities, L’Arche, the Student Cross Pilgrimage and even a football tournament – Euro 96.

Clare McBeath (full-time job share, Baptist minister) worked for two years as multi-faith chaplain in a large further-education institution in a northern city. She is currently minister of Openshaw Baptist Tabernacle in East Manchester. She has a doctorate in contextual theologies and is a non-executive director of Manchester Mental Health and Social Care NHS Trust. She has been engaged in local regeneration as chair of the Health and Well-Being Programme, as a local school governor and as vice-chair of Brook Manchester. Clare is co-author of Crumbs of Hope: Prayers from the City (Peterborough: Inspire, 2006) and of the Dancing Scarecrow worship-resource website – <www.dancingscarecrow.org.uk>.

Ian Maher (full-time, Anglican Church Army evangelist). Since January 2006 he has been the multi-faith chaplaincy coordinator at Sheffield Hallam University. In previous posts he has been head of academic programmes at Wilson Carlile College of Evangelism, Sheffield, where he also taught ethics and world religions; national coordinator of the ecumenical Certificate in Evangelism Studies; and a parish evangelist in south-east London. He has also written extensively about film.

Stephen Robbins (full-time, Anglican priest) trained at King’s College London and St Augustine’s College, Canterbury, and then worked in parishes in Durham diocese for 11 years before becoming a forces chaplain in 1987. His career since then has been within the forces, including a time as chaplain of the Royal Memorial Chapel, Sandhurst. He is currently Chaplain General Land Forces and Archdeacon for the Army.

Hugh Shilson-Thomas (full-time, Anglican priest) is dean of chapel and chaplain at Selwyn College and chaplain and director of Studies in Theology at Newnham College, Cambridge University. After chaplaincies at Kingston University and Robinson College, Cambridge, and a masters