

Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy



Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy (BRC) is an ecumenical partnership between the Diocese of Hereford and the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District of the Methodist Church set up to offer pastoral care and outreach to farmers, farming families and agricultural communities principally within Hereford and South Shropshire.

2016 saw substantial requests for support from the Chaplaincy Team with approximately 250 farming families receiving help ranging from a confidential listening ear, farm and home visits, to signposting to appropriate organisations and practical, hands-on assistance. Pastoral contacts reach the Chaplaincy through various channels including the national helpline, The Farming Community Network (FCN), members of the agricultural industry and Trading Standards.

The agricultural community has been going through an extremely difficult time with depressed prices. Additionally, Bovine Tuberculosis (BvTB) remains a major issue within the area covered by BRC, with farms with positive reactors to BvTB tests under significant social and economic stress. Many problems remain with the operation of the Basic Payment Scheme (formerly known as the Single Payment Scheme) which 80% of farms within the locality rely on for financial viability.

In response, BRC has added new chaplains to its team, with eight additional chaplains added to the original team of five. Revd Jon Chesworth and Revd Frances Biseker from the Shropshire and Marches Methodist Circuit are among those newly commissioned.

Opening the service, Chaplain Nick Read said: 'Chaplaincy is as wide as the people who take part in it. Our passion is the farming community, our motivation is the love of Jesus Christ'.

Delivering the sermon, Methodist District Chair Revd Rachel Parkinson explained the place of chaplains working in the secular world and confronted by people in need:

'Through a spontaneous movement of our heart we want to share with them the goods that we have been given by God and so we act not only in words but with truth and with action, recognising all the time that when we serve our neighbour it is Christ that we are serving.'

Increasing the number of chaplains is a timely measure aimed at enhancing the provision of pastoral care, growing denominational partnerships and developing the strategic links in the north of the area, especially around Shrewsbury.

Following the service Nick Read reflected on the new cohort of chaplains:

'They bring their own specialist skills and attributes to the Chaplaincy Team. One obvious contribution is the welcome addition of more female chaplains. We have been male dominated thus far and this can be limiting when dealing with gender-sensitive issues or supporting farming families in the round. At a personal level, it's a great feeling to belong to something that is growing in importance, which is ecumenical, and which clearly demonstrates the churches' commitment to the farming community.'

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