

NORTHERN IRELAND



What a privilege it is for Sports Chaplaincy Ireland to serve people in clubs and associations up and down the country!

Every person is important and valuable - from the athlete, to the supporter, and every staff member, volunteer and helper in between. As a team of volunteer chaplains, we can bring a gospel of care and love that does not have to fit a budget or particular outcome. We are instead able to bring pastoral and spiritual care that cuts across all agendas and is totally people centred. This past year we have seen the demand for chaplaincy increase significantly and we have been able to appoint 12 regional chaplains as a consequence of our work with the Irish FA and their Ahead of the Game initiative - "Mental Health Awareness Program" which has broadened our geographical footprint.



(Northern Ireland conference)

Mental health is a major topic of concern within every sports club and the recognition that a chaplain has a vital

role to play through their presence and availability is evidence of God at work.

In this last year God has been at work through all the difficulties that life has produced for the sporting community in Northern Ireland. Our chaplains have been required more than ever to help and journey with people through troubled waters, as well as celebrating life with them and bringing fresh perspective.

God has been present through our chaplains during incredible heartbreak and journeys of renewal and refreshment. We have also been there when people's worlds have come crashing down and have been able to journey with them through the pain and anguish. We have been there to listen, support and provide practical, pastoral and spiritual care to many others, hopefully helping prevent their worlds from crashing down round them.



(Irish chaplains sharing a meal at the Irish gathering)

Our task is great: to have chaplains serving in every club and at every level in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and we would love to see an increase in our footprint across women's sport and disability sport. We can thank God that He is starting to open doors for us not only here, but across many sports in the province.

We have seen an increase in the appointment of chaplains in Northern Irish amateur football across a range of leagues such as Newcastle & District League, Mid-Ulster League and Ballymena Provincial



(Roy Walker is a former football manager and player in Northern Ireland. Roy spoke at our NI Conference in 2019)

In rugby, five clubs have appointed chaplains in the last 12 months including Coleraine Rugby Club and a chaplain has been appointed in a cricket and hockey club which has 1100 members. On the topic of cricket, we have been endorsed by the North West Cricket Union and have been delighted to appoint chaplains to four new clubs.

We want to serve every person, within every club, sport and level of ability across all of Ireland. Our resources seem so limited, but we are praying to the God who owns the harvest to send workers. No matter how overwhelming the task may seem to some, we know who is in control and capable of more than we can think or imagine.

So, as we step into this new decade, we must have the strength and courage to do what God has asked us to do and have faith that He who has begun a good work will carry it on to completion. As we listen, He guides us, being fully persuaded that He can do what he promised.

Please continue to pray for and support our chaplains

Philip Mitchell
National Director for Northern Ireland

