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Sports Chaplaincy Trustees and National Directors

WHAT A GREAT privilege it is for me to be involved in Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland

In 2019 Philip Mitchell (National Director for Ireland) and I met in Belfast and discussed the possibilities of appointing further sports chaplains on the island of Ireland. This conversation was something that really connected with me as I had been the chairperson of a local football club and had been involved in management with the university ladies Gaelic football team. In addition, I am a senior leader in a church and am a part-time chaplain on a university campus.

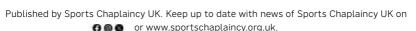
Having recently joined SCUK as a trustee, I have been so encouraged to hear stories of how chaplains are impacting the world of sport. This is no surprise as I have long understood chaplaincy to have a key role in providing pastoral care and supporting wellbeing. In sport I have observed that the model which focused almost exclusively on physical performance to the detriment of the other aspects of an athlete's life left

many poorly equipped for the challenges they would face.

The increasing recognition of the necessity to have a holistic approach to athletes and their wellbeing which appreciates their physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs is emerging. It is into this space that we should step with boldness and confidence, understanding that just as the physical needs of athletes can be met by coaches, physiotherapists, dieticians/nutritionists, the psychological and social needs can be met by psychologists, mentors and liaison officers, the spiritual needs can be met by chaplains.

Thanks to everyone who supports Sports Chaplaincy, we hope this issue of Activate blesses you all.

Daniel Caldwell, trustee on behalf of the board



To register for our monthly prayer letter visit www.sportschaplaincy.org.uk/prayer

#### Gratitude and reflection

It has been a year of growth and challenges for Sports Chaplaincy UK, explains CEO **Warren Evans** 

#### Dear friends and partners

AS I SIT down to write this welcome to the pages of Activate Magazine, my heart is filled with gratitude and reflection. The past year has brought its fair share of challenges, yet through it all, we have witnessed the unwavering faithfulness of our Heavenly Father. As Psalm 23:4 reminds us, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

In the embrace of these pages, I invite you to join me in a journey of warmth, inspiration, and spiritual encouragement. The pages of Activate Magazine have been carefully woven together to reflect not only the incredible growth of Sports Chaplaincy UK but also the deep and profound impact it has had on lives across the spectrum of sport.

The community of sport has evolved in unimaginable ways, transcending borders and languages, uniting people through their shared love for the game. This year, we've witnessed remarkable growth, particularly in golf, cricket, and rugby union. As we see these ministries thrive, we recognise the beautiful opportunity they

provide for us to bring the light of Christ into the lives of athletes and fans alike.

One of the incredible blessings that the digital age has bestowed upon us is the ability to reach hearts and minds through various media platforms. We're immensely thankful for the media opportunities that have allowed us to spread our message of hope, faith, and love further than we could have ever imagined.

Our hearts swell with gratitude as we reflect on the overwhelming success of National Sports Sunday. This movement, which aims to unite churches in caring for the sporting community, has reached record numbers in 2023. The spirit of compas-



sion and unity displayed during this event is a true testament to the power of faith in action. It's a reminder that our mission is not only to serve but to bridge the gap between the spiritual and the physical realms.

Speaking of challenges, we can't help but look back on the Five Peak Challenge with a mix of exhaustion and elation. Scaling those gruelling peaks was a testament to the strength of our spirits and our unwavering

commitment to the cause. The funds raised during this challenge will undoubtedly fuel our efforts to make a lasting impact on the lives of athletes and those around them

In the face of adversity, it's awe-inspiring to witness how much we've accomplished on a budget that pales in comparison to other charities. This goes to show that when God's hand is upon a mission, resources are multiplied, and miracles happen.

As we move forward, our gaze is set on strengthening our leadership team and board. The road ahead is exciting, and we believe that the right people will join us in this journey, sharing our passion and drive to bring hope to the community of sport.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every chaplain who works tirelessly behind the scenes, offering spiritual guidance, comfort, and a listening ear to those who need it most. Your selfless dedication does not go unnoticed

And as we flick through these pages, let us not forget our expansion Ireland. The work there is growing, and hearts are being touched, reminding us that our mission knows no geographical bounds.

In closing, I invite you to embrace the stories, testimonies. and reflections within this magazine. May they ignite a fire of faith within you and encourage you to see the incredible impact that faith can have in the community of sport. Thank you for joining us on this remarkable journey together, we can continue to make a difference.

Blessings and warm regards

Warren Evans

CEO, Sports Chaplaincy UK





# Gearing up for new areas

After a turbulent couple of years, sports clubs and communities have further opened up their doors in England, writes National Director Matt Baker



Simon Bailey, Pastoral **Director for Horse Racing** 

OVER THE LAST year we have been able to continue to train and support many chaplains through our CPD accredited induction course via online training. As well as introducing new chaplains to sport, we are also having to adapt to new expectations for chaplaincy so we were excited earlier this year to enter into a new agreement for chaplaincy provision at Manchester City.

Football chaplaincy is where it all started for SCUK and one of those who has faithfully served as a chaplain is Peter Amos at Barnsley FC.

After 27 years Peter decided it was time to step down and hand the baton on to Zach Zachariah (see page 15). The club handled this transition brilliantly with a farewell to Peter with staff at the club and also honouring him on his last match day as chaplain. Beyond football we are very excited to

announce further chaplaincy appointments in other sports too such as rugby league. horse racing and running clubs. We believe that chaplaincy at a running club is a first for SCUK so we were delighted to be able to be involved in a commissioning service for Jain Walker at St Austell Running Club in Cornwall in July.

Within golf, we have continued networking, connecting initiating relationships within the industry across England and we are so excited to see what God will continue to do.

In April we were able to take new motor racing chaplains through our induction training (the first in person induction training since early 2020) and alongside the experience and leadership of James Rigby, support them in providing chaplaincy this season to the Historic Sports Car Club



A commissioning service at The Message Trust for Wythenshawe Amateurs FC near Manchester with chaplain Andy Campsall, WAFC Chairman Carl Barratt and Warren Evans

events. It is wonderful to see how much they have been valued and appreciated in such a short space of time.

As we work hard as a team developina our processes and strategy this year, we are continuing to trust God will keep us in step as he opens up new connections and opportunities within sport.

#### **SCOTLAND**





Stuart Coleman with new Threave

Rovers chaplain Tom Dreha

# **Appointment** helps growth

Football dominates chaplaincy in Scotland but there are areas of breakthrough, reports National Director Mark Fleming



Gordy Mackay and Iain **Cuthberston with Scone Thistle** FC manager Charlie King



**Craig Brown with** Mark Flemina

IN 1998 I was appointed chaplain at Partick Thistle FC. I never would have imagined that 25 years later I would be overseeing around 165 sports chaplains (over 140 of these being at football clubs). Other sports for which we provide chaplains are shinty, rugby, basketball and cycling.

Such has been the growth, we have now appointed an Assistant National Director of Sports Chaplaincy Scotland, Stuart Coleman. Stuart has initially started off in a volunteer role and has made a significant impact already. He is pictured making his first appointment by introducing Tom Dreha as chaplain to Threave Rovers FC.

In Scotland, the challenge for us now is not to convince clubs of the merits of having a chaplain, the challenge is actually convincing churches of the merits of releasing people to be chaplains! Outward looking missional churches that recognise the opportunities that sports chaplaincy can present to build a bridge into their sporting communities are thriving and growing.

Around 60 per cent of our chaplains are not ordained ministers. they are simply mature, committed Christians with the requisite personalities, experience and skillsets to enable them to relate to the sports people they encounter. Outgoing chaplain to Scone Thistle FC, Pastor Gordy Mackay helpfully sourced a replacement chaplain from his church, lain Cuthberston. Manager Charlie King welcomed the new appointment because of his own experience of chaplaincy as a player at Brechin City FC.

deeply personally saddened with the passing away of my dear friend former Scotland National Team Manager and Patron of Sports Chaplaincy Scotland, Craig Brown, We are retiring the title of Patron and announcing an Ambassador for Sports Chaplaincy Scotland in due course.





# Great things happening

God continues to bless chaplaincy work in Wales, says National Director Martin Lewis



Wrexham Town FC chaplains Sarah Sankey and Josh Smith

WE PRAISE GOD for the great things that continue to happen across Wales and also thank God for the many faithful chaplains that keep attending clubs/teams at least every week.

Recent new chaplains include places like Cardiff City Women, Wrexham Town FC, Ffos Las Racecourse, RGC, Ebbw Vale RFC and Colwyn Bay RFC.

We also continue to support major events across Wales like the Swansea Ironman, the Run4Wales race events and even the World Coastal Rowing Championships held at Saundersfoot. It has been great to see many more churches starting to really capture the vision and opportunity that comes through sport. We've had churches support the Porthcawl and Barry 10k and a cross section support the World Coastal Rowing Cham-

pionships. We continue to see many great spiritual opportunities like installing a garden of remembrance at Merthyr Town FC, and the opportunity just to quietly get alongside people as they come to reflect over lost loved ones and to minister into their lives. We've even seen people come to church from clubs and go on to find Christ and be baptised.

We continue to give out so many Bibles and New Testaments thanks to Good News For Everyone. It has been great how God has provided us with a little finance so that we've been able to take on John Butler as our North Wales development manager and who is doing a great job already.

We are also delighted that Chris Armstrong helps us with rugby union development in North Wales. We are though sorry to have lost Steve Jones who was driving SCUKs all/



Glenn Symons with cup chaplain at Blackwood RFC supporting Blackwood women's team

dis-ability work. We have had many endorsements over the year, including Gareth Richards, the Nomads Football Academy Manager who cannot praise the influence of sports chaplaincy enough amongst his squad and the wonderful work that the Rev Sally Baird has done there.

There are many challenges facing all sport in Wales especially financial pressures, which makes what we do even more important as we support so many community clubs on a volunteer basis and yet be so well regarded.

#### **IRELAND**





Ciaran Buckley



Lois Curragh

### We've so much to thank God for

Sports chaplaincy continues to thrive across Ireland, reports National Director **Phil Mitchell** 

IN THIS CALENDAR YEAR, we have had so much to thank God for... regular prayer times together plus answers to prayers, new opportunities to serve and to share plus doors opening to new sports clubs and sports.

Hearts are softening and curiosity is growing, leading to Alpha for sportspeople which was launched in Belfast in January over eleven weeks and will soon go online. Partnerships with Good News For Everyone, Crown Jesus Ministries and Made for More are



Alpha for sportspeople launched in Belfast in January

being developed to support our chaplains on the ground.

National Governing body relationships continue flourish with ringing endorsements from the Irish FA in Belfast, the PFAI in Dublin and the North West Cricket Union in Londonderry. A new series entitled 'Stories from GB' started, providing training and insights online for Irish chaplains featuring Premier League and Football League Chaplains and Welsh Boxing chaplain John Funnell.

Ken Revie, our chaplain to the PGA Golf Professionals, hosted our second inaugural Sports Chaplaincy Golf Day attended by 70 sportspeople across Ireland at Knock Golf Club. Internationals Eric Miller (Rugby), Gail Redmond (Football) and Bethany Harp-(Hockey) plus Alastair Donaldson (Running) joined the growing list of ambassadors whilst we were delighted to add the very experienced Russell Bowers to the staff in Northern Ireland

Over 50 new chaplaincy appointments were across Ireland including Ciaran Buckley. with IJ19 Republic of Ireland squad, Andy Carroll to Bohemians FC. David Woods to Ballynahinch Rugby Club, Gary Halliday to Derriaghy Cricket Club. John Loughery and Charlene Thompson to Derry City FC, Lois Curragh to Lisburn Ladies and Allyson O'Regan to Cobh Ramblers FC in Cork.

Please continue to prav for all our chaplains as they serve at their clubs and please continue to pray for us as an army of sports chaplains serving across Ireland that we may be both obedient and courageous and that our hearts be filled with love.

### **FIVE-STAR EFFORT**

Amazing fundraisers for Sports Chaplaincy UK climbed five peaks in five days, raising more than £20,000 for the charity. Here's how they got on...

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID about sport and mental health over the last few years, and at Sports Chaplaincy UK and Ireland, we wanted to do more. So, for Mental Health Awareness Week in May, and to raise awareness and address the stigma of Mental Health Awareness, our CEO Warren Evans and England Assistant Director Christian Wienkamp climbed the five highest mountains in each home nation and Ireland in five days, with Christian then going on to complete the Leeds Half Marathon on the sixth day to tie in with National Sports Sunday. The pair were joined at each mountain by other chaplains,

leaders, athletes and friends as they walked and talked. The fundraiser collected more than £20,000, which will rise to nearly £22,000 thanks to Gift Aid. The challenge was followed by a wide variety of national media and sports communities which proved a great blessing to us.

James Stout, club chaplain at Dunbar United joined in with the first peak and shared: "Climbing Ben Nevis was a great, if not challenging experience. The day itself was brilliant, getting to chat with fellow chaplains on what was a decent day weather wise. Between family, friends, colleagues and people connected with Dunbar









CEO Warren Evans was joined by other chaplains, athletes and friends to climb the UK and Ireland's highest peaks United. they contributed several hundreds of pounds to the fundraising total, which I'm extremely grateful for. On a personal level, the slogan 'It's good to walk and talk' has motivated me to improve my physical health as well as keeping good mental health, and I've since taken steps to lose weight and become physically healthier".

Matt Davis, club chaplain to London Broncos Rugby League team, also supported the challenge and completed three of the Peaks, Raising more than £2,500, Matt was a key support in the challenge and with London Broncos cheering him on and tweeting him every step of the way, it showed just how valuable he is to the club

community!

As part of the challenge. Warren also did several media interviews in preparation for the event with Dr Allan Johnston about the 5 Mental Health Mountains that many of us face which can still be found on the SCUK website.

All the funds raised from this challenge go directly towards resourcing and equipping chaplains to continue to reach their world.



#### Determined to make a difference

Sports Chaplaincy UK trustee and Paralympian legend **Anne Wafula Strike** believes chaplaincy is the perfect pulpit

SPORT CAN TURN into a pulpit through chaplaincy, according to Paralympian star Anne Wafula Strike.

Anne, who was born in Kenya, is now retired from competitive sport but is the Secretary-General's Champion for Equality in Sports.

She is a passionate supporter of chaplaincy and believes it is an incredible opportunity to share faith

"We need to be witnesses of Christ wherever we are," she said

"I believe chaplaincy is a ministry that sometimes people take for granted. In the same way a pastor or a vicar will stand in a pulpit, chaplaincy and sport becomes our pulpit. Chaplaincy is all about making sure that Jesus is realised and people know of his goodness and mercy on and off the field of play. This is why I love Sports Chaplaincy UK and why I support the charity. They are reaching tens of thousands of lives on a weekly basis."

Anne herself benefited from the support of others when she was an athlete.

"We had cell groups where people would pray together," she recalls.

"As an elite athlete I had a lady named Alison who was one of the physios and she was such an encouragement. I was in the wilderness training and competing. In the evening I knew someone was praying with me... it was so encouraging. We need this ministry to grow because chaplains are unusual ministers. They're ministering to a certain group of people but people wanting to give their best and breaking barriers and boundaries to get to their best level."

Anne's faith has been her rock throughout her life.

She added: "The Lord is my guiding star... my faith always helped me find myself again when things would go wrong on the track"

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# God saved my life

Rugby union cult hero Nick Williams is the latest ambassador for Sports Chaplaincy UK. Here is his incredible story

#### FORMER JUNIOR ALL BLACKS

number eight Nick Williams is thankful to God for saving his life after he suffered a cardiac arrest in 2022.

The retired star - who played for Cardiff Blues before hanging up his boots in 2020 - collapsed in the back garden of his friend's house. Jason Redrup, a retired police officer, was the one who found the Aucklander, and immediately performed CPR before alerting emergency services, with an air ambulance then rushing Williams off to hospital.

Williams, now 39, says the support he received from chaplains Martin and Heather Lewis - Welsh Directors for Sports Chaplaincy UK - was amazing and encouraging.

He said: "We all crave that shoulder to lean on. The support from our chaplains Martin and Heather has been absolutely amazing, encouraging me and my family all the way. I wholeheartedly recommend any sports club having a chaplain and for players,



Nick Williams in action for Cardiff Blues

coaches etc to reach out and use them. I am delighted to become an Ambassador for Sports Chaplaincy UK.

"I'm originally from New Zealand, played all over the world and for the Cardiff Blues where I had the privilege of meeting Martin and Heather Lewis who have been top notch. They've been amazing in the way they supported me, whenever I was playing, and even more so now I'm retired. "I've gone through a tough few

months but for them to be there and be in my corner the whole time for myself and my family has meant the world to us all. They have been absolute rocks and I'm so grateful and I'm so humbled and privileged to be a



# **MY NEW JOURNEY** WITH THE TYKES

Barnsley Football Club was founded by Rev Tiverton Preedy in 1887. Its Christian roots remain with the appointment of new chaplain, Zach Zachariah

MY JOURNEY WITH Barnsley Football Club started with a surprise phone call from the former chaplain, Peter Amos, who served for 27 years at the club, asking if I'd be interested in taking over from him.

Peter introduced me to Sports Chaplaincy UK. I wasn't prepared at first for anything but just took the step of faith to navigate through this new venture. I have never functioned in a chaplaincy role before but through my journey understood it's not too different from a church pastoral role; as it's all about people.

My rounds take place on a Thursday and on match days at home and my trustees from the Solid Rock Havercroft Church have released me very supportively. I meet with cleaners to the kit man, ground staff, security, reception office and also with the media team. I am in regular contact with staff and have become part of the fabric of the club and given access to all areas through the generosity of the CEO and the owners.

I have learned that the speed of change is sudden and you have always got to be prepared with every aspect of pastoral care for any individual. We have done ministry to injured players and seen miracles happen.

Also, we run a Bible study and prayer time each week at the academy director's office which is open for anyone to attend. Very often I am scattering ashes for fans and for their families who have passed and am given the opportunity to share the love of lesus to them.

I realise through my journev at the club that God is not looking for perfect people, he is just looking for genuine ones



Zach Zachariah at Wemblev to watch Barnslev in last season's League One play-off final



You always have got to be prepared with every aspect of pastoral care



Event chaplains have fascinating opportunities to share their faith. One such chaplain is triathlon and iron woman star Pat Cooke-Rogers

WHEN I COMMITTED my life to God in 1995 I had no idea of the crazy journey he would take me on. He took an overweight, unfit, totally nonathletic mother of four and threw me into the world of triathlon. Within six years he had taken me to two World Championships and my first Ultra - without me ever being any good at swimming. cycling or running!

At a race in Hawaii I found a pre-race service called 'Ironprayer'. God told me to take it back to the UK. Much against my will I did, and this evolved into chaplaincy - even before I knew what chaplaincy was! This year, God willing, I

will have worked as chaplain for four event organisers at 14 races for 60+ days in England, Scotland, Wales, Sweden and Canada, I will have spoken with hundreds of athletes, family members, event staff and local people. I will have celebrated and commiserated with athletes. hugged many of them and made countless cups of tea! It is an immense and humbling privilege to walk alongside so many people, and to try to show them the love that Jesus has shown me.

Event chaplaincy is exhausting. exhilarating. boring, intense, distressing, exciting and wonderful. You walk many miles, get hot, cold, wet and wind blown (possibly all in the same day!) but you are alongside so many people with so many opportunities to be Jesus for them.

There are hundreds of events in the UK without chaplains - maybe there are some near you?





#### New drive to reach motorsport

The gospel is being spread throughout motorsport after an incredible breakthrough in recent months...

been given the green light in motorsport and is being recognised at the highest level in this country as the answer to supporting human welfare

SPORTS CHAPLAINCY HAS

in the sport.

Over the past year Rev James Rigby has been working with the SCUK team to establish a core of motorsport chaplains with one of the most respected clubs in motorsport, the Historic Sports Car Club. James has a professional background in racing and competed for many

years himself before taking up the call to ordination in the Church of England. While training at theological college in Oxford he became involved with the Jesus Saves Racing Team, a Christian team founded by Brazilian F1 driver Alex Ribeiro in the 1970s and still focused today on sharing the gospel through motorsport.

The team competes in Classic Formula Ford racing which is organised by the HSCC and as the relationship with the club developed James had the conversation

with the club chairman about how all the people involved are supported. James says, "It was amazing to see how God was giving us favour with the club, when I spoke about what I do as a priest and my heart to support the welfare of the motorsport community, the chairman asked why don't you become our chaplain?

"Since then it has been a joint journey of exploring what that looks like and recruiting a team of chaplains to start meeting the needs at the racetrack."

If you would be interested in finding out more and how you can get involved please contact admin@ sportschaplaincy.org.uk

## **GREAT SCOTS!**

There are now an incredible 25 female football club chaplains in Scotland, providing amazing opportunities to impact the women's game, writes Mark Fleming

SPORTS CHAPLAINCY STEADI-LY grew in Scottish football for 15 years before Scottish women's football even appeared on my radar.

In 2013, I was speaking on chaplaincy at a UEFA A Licence coaching course in Largs held by the Scottish FA. The head coach of Hibernian Women FC, Willie Kirk, approached me and asked if I could provide a chaplain for his team. I had to admit that I didn't know where to start in terms of training someone to be a women's team chaplain. He suggested that I piloted the role myself and since I had two grown up daughters I thought I could take up the challenge. I was blown away



Hibs chaplain Catriona Lamont

by their technical ability and tactical understanding - they were such a joy to work with and so appreciated being given the same value as a men's team.

I realised that they would be better served by a female chaplain so duly appointed Catriona Lamont, who has been with them since, and is so valued by the club that they have taken her away with them when playing in Europe and was recently with them on a pre-season trip to Cork.

Ten years on we now have 25 female football club chaplains (plus female chaplains in shinty and cycling!) covering most Scottish Women's Premier League 1 and 2 clubs. and where a SPFL club has a female counterpart team we seek to place a female chaplain there too. The appreciation and engagement of the players and management is tremendous

Some of our female chaplains would admit to having



Mark Flemina in his role at Hibs



Alison McLeod and Margaret Liddell

had little knowledge of football before becoming club chaplains but because they have a desire for Jesus and a passion for women being given the same value and resources as men they have developed a passion for their teams and are doing an incredible job. Two great examples are Alison McLeod (Kilmarnock) and Margaret Liddell (Ayr United).



"As a former player, coach and manager, I cannot recom-

mend highly enough the vital role played by chaplains within football clubs."

Chris Powell. retired footballer and former Elite BAME coach for the England national team



"Chaplains can be of help to all sorts of people involved

with sport, when crisis, need or difficulty comes. I commend the idea of sports chaplaincy and the work of Sports Chaplaincy UK to you."

Sir Alex Ferguson CBE. Director, Manchester United



"Sports Chaplaincy UK has a passion for seeing the local church engage in the community of sport. I'm delighted to celebrate all the work they do with hundreds of chaplains across the country and commend to churches who haven't considered getting involved in looking at how they can serve their local community to explore this possibility." Bishop Mike Royal,

Co-Chair for the Birmingham Churches Commonwealth Working Group



"Personally, I know the importance of chaplaincy in my

life and I am delighted to be a patron of Sports Chaplaincy UK recognising the vital work of chaplains within sport." Fabrice Muamba, retired footballer



"We are told in just the second chapter of the Bible that we

don't thrive in isolation. Sport often creates wonderful environments in which communities are built and relationships are allowed to flourish. In my experiences as a Christian professional rugby league player, Sports Chaplaincy UK has been the archetypal nourishment that encourages those environments to thrive." Jamie Jones Buchanan, retired professional rugby league player



"Every athlete needs some kind of support and

encouragement and a chaplain can be a valuable source of this support." Anne Wafula Strike, former Paralympian and aold medallist athlete

#### WHAT THEY SAY **ABOUT US**

Don't just take our word for it. Here's what others are saying about Sports Chaplaincy UK and our work...





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