

# Keele University Chapel

## Free Church Chaplain

### Information Pack

The role of Free Church Chaplain is an exciting opportunity to play a key part in supporting our diverse student and staff community at Keele University as a member of the Chaplaincy team. The following provides some background information about chaplaincy at Keele, and the life of the university and its chapel.



### The setting of Keele University

Keele is a campus university located in a beautiful setting in Staffordshire, and this year is celebrating its 75th anniversary. The university is known for its breadth of teaching and research, and the campus includes local businesses and researchers who work here in a variety of partnerships that enrich the life of the university. There is a strong emphasis on sustainability with the campus already partially powered by its wind turbines and solar panels, with a goal of being carbon neutral by 2030.

As well as many professional qualifications such as medicine, pharmacy and physiotherapy Keele specialises in multi-disciplinary learning, and students can study fascinating combinations of subjects. Most of the students and many of the staff live on campus, creating a genuinely welcoming, friendly and integrated community, which has shops, cafes and a GP surgery. There are also woods, lakes and beautiful grounds to enjoy as part of the campus.

Keele is a small village on the edge of the town of Newcastle-under-Lyme, close to the city of Stoke-on-Trent. For more general information about the university and the locality, please see the university website [www.keele.ac.uk](http://www.keele.ac.uk)





## The University Chaplaincy Team

There are four chaplains at Keele, all working with students of all faiths and none: Revd Stephanie Couvela is the Anglican Chaplain and this summer will be stepping up to become coordinating chaplain; Niall Hammond is the Roman Catholic Lay Chaplain, and Rukia Bi is our Muslim Chaplain. Whilst Rukia's role has a particular focus on the Muslim community, she is also invaluable as a knowledgeable multifaith practitioner. A visiting Roman Catholic Priest Chaplain, Fr John Laybourn, combines commitments at the University Chapel with local parish duties.

Our Free Church Chaplain is formally supported by and represents the Baptist, United Reformed and Methodist Churches, but all of the chaplains work collaboratively and closely. They all live either on or near campus, and make time to reflect, plan and eat together. The team is committed to both Christian unity and multi-faith collaboration, which is expressed in prayer and action.

The chaplaincy is overseen by the Director of Student Services and Success and is part of the **Student Services Directorate** where there are positive working relationships across specialist areas. There is also a **Chaplaincy Management Group** which helps give broader direction and oversight of the three Christian chaplains, made up of senior representatives of sponsoring denominations and chaired by the Director of Student Support and Success. The chaplaincy team is well resourced and respected and the university sees its chaplains as an integral component of the pastoral and welfare provision for the University.

The Free Church Chaplain is additionally supported by the **Free Church Resource Group** which enables the three partner denominations responsible for this role to work collaboratively. The group also oversees the maintenance of the manse and finances of the Free Church role.

Each year the chaplaincy team is enriched by a Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant, a gap year role usually taken by a recent graduate. This provides an opportunity to explore vocation whilst working in a lively chaplaincy setting. Depending on their gifting and experience our 'VCAs' offer pastoral care, leadership of small groups, preaching and worship leading, and managing the chapel's social media presence.

## Chaplaincy Vision

Together the team seeks to fulfil the vision for chaplaincy:

- to seek, protect and encourage the life of faith and spirituality in the context of the University
- to provide pastoral care for staff and students of all faiths and none

This is fulfilled by:

- providing safe space for pastoral support and encounter
- offering hospitality
- spiritual development, guidance and education
- facilitating conversation, encounter and understanding within and between faiths
- engaging meaningfully with the wider University as critical friend and resource
- sustaining and encouraging the life of worship at the University
- working for justice, peace and sustainability in the University and the wider world



## Keele Chapel

The striking purpose-built Chapel is at the very centre of the university campus, and was constructed in 1965 as a place for ecumenical Christian worship and activity. Inside, there is the large multi-purpose Main Chapel (used for worship, student events, music concerts, graduations, and a wide variety of other functions). There is also a smaller East Chapel that is generally reserved for prayer and reflection. In addition, there is a dedicated room (The Space) available for individual private prayer, contemplation or meditation for people of all faiths or none. The chapel also contains a Roman Catholic apse (where the sacrament is reserved), and several meeting areas and offices.



The Chapel has always been the focus for a diverse and vibrant community, with a through-flow of several hundred people every week. It is a daily meeting place for students, with free tea and coffee and a variety of activities—the building is often used for concerts, arts installations and other university events, as well as hosting graduations twice a year.

**Regular Sunday worship** is held throughout the year including vacations, with integrated Anglican/Free Church worship (known as TEN:15) followed by a Roman Catholic Mass at 12.30pm. Both congregations attract students, staff and others from the surrounding community, and the Chapel functions in many ways as a university church as well as a chaplaincy base.

The TEN:15 Anglican/Free Church service is co-led by the Anglican and Free Church Chaplains, with support and regular preaching by the Lay Catholic Chaplain and Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant. It is relatively informal in style, typically involving guitars, piano and sometimes organ; projection is used as well as some formal liturgy, and Holy Communion is celebrated on alternate weeks. The ethos and teaching are overtly LGBT+ inclusive, with a focus on God's unconditional welcome for all and exploring what it means to be a disciple of Christ today. Attendance at TEN:15 fluctuates greatly from year to year—at present it is usually 30-40—and the congregation is mainly students with a smaller long-term group of non-students.

Catholic Mass also runs throughout the year. In term about three quarters of the congregation are students, many of them international, and a number are involved as readers, altar servers etc. Keele Chapel is constituted as a Local Ecumenical Partnership, sponsored by Anglican, Roman Catholic, Baptist, United Reformed and Methodist Churches, and overseen by the Chapel Committee (elected from within the Chapel community). The Chapel Committee recently voted to seek to register the chapel for same sex marriages under the rites of the free churches: this is being progressed but due to the complexities of church and government rules it remains a work in progress. If we are successful in this endeavour, it would be our Free Church chaplain who would facilitate or—ideally—celebrate any marriages of same-sex couples.



Each of the Christian chaplains has an office in the chapel, and there is a 'drop-in' culture with many students, particularly from the Christian community, looking to the chaplaincy team for pastoral support. Much of the work of the Christian chaplains is thus focused in and around the Chapel itself, which has both advantages and disadvantages. The chapel has a degree of visibility and people know where to find the team, but the words "chapel" and "chaplaincy" are often used interchangeably which is unhelpful.



There are other spaces on campus available for prayer and reflection, including our Islamic Centre (left) and a small but growing number of interfaith prayer rooms in various locations on campus. In recent years the chaplaincy team have undertaken occasional sessions as part of academic programmes (mainly in the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences) which introduce students to ideas around the impact of faith and culture and how it might affect themselves or those they work with.

The chapel is very well used during Welcome Week with events organised by both the Chaplaincy and Christian Union, and the chaplaincy team organise a variety of well-attended social events such as chapel lunches on occasional Sundays, BBQs, a Christmas lunch and party, and culminating in the end of year Chapel Ball. The Christian chaplains organise a chapel weekend away in March and occasionally things like trips to Taizé, a retreat in daily life programme and other opportunities for students' spiritual and personal growth. Multi-faith events such as a Grand Iftar during Ramadan and a student-led Sikh Langar are also hosted at the chapel.



Keele University has a wide variety of student-run faith groups, including multiple Christian groups some of which meet in the chapel or use it for their larger events. Christian groups include the SCM-affiliated Student Chapel Fellowship, the Christian Union, CathSoc (Catholic Society), a variety of worship and discipleship societies rooted in the Pentecostal tradition, and Haven, a small group supported by the chaplaincy for anyone wanting to explore issues around being both LGBT+ and a person of faith. Other faith societies include two Islamic Societies and groups for Hindu, Sikh and Jewish students. Most are student-led and run, but the chaplaincy team seek to build relationships and provide support where possible.



### Chaplaincy online

Social media plays an important part in how we communicate with students and the wider university. Our Chaplaincy Assistant is key in

keeping our social media accounts (mainly Instagram and Facebook) engaging and up to date, and we regularly livestream our Sunday worship and other key events.

### ECO Church and FairTrade

As a chapel community we take seriously the place of social and environmental justice as a key aspect of the outworking of our faith. We have received a Silver Eco Church award and are also a FairTrade Church.

We hope that this gives you a flavour of Keele University and its chaplaincy. Please don't hesitate to contact us to learn more or if you have any questions.



## Practical details

The post is offered as an 0.85FTE appointment, (with flexibility around hours although the expectation is that the focus/balance will prioritise university term time.) There will be an initial six month probationary period and access to ongoing training and development. It is hoped that the successful candidate will be in post early September 2024 or as soon as personal circumstances allow.

Funding for this role is complex given the involvement of the university and three denominations. It is firmly in place for the coming three academic years, and all the partners remain committed to the role which has existed for many decades. The Free Church Resource Group (supported by the Free Church Chaplain) continues to work to secure ongoing funding beyond 2028.

The interview panel will include representatives of the Free Churches, Chaplaincy and of the University. The selection process will take place over two days including a Sunday offering the opportunity for the candidates to share in worship and meet members of the community if possible. On the Sunday afternoon candidates will be asked to give a short presentation to the chapel worshipping community and members of the interview panel. Candidates are welcome to make informal contact or visit the university and chapel prior to the formal selection process. Enquiries and arrangements should be made by email with the current Coordinating/Free Church Chaplain Revd James Pritchard [j.pritchard@keele.ac.uk](mailto:j.pritchard@keele.ac.uk)



Remuneration for this role includes a house, which is provided by the sponsoring denominations in a dedicated area of staff housing on campus. It is a spacious home consisting of 4 bedrooms (plus small office/box room), kitchen, lounge-diner and separate reception room, bathroom as well as a downstairs toilet, utility room and a large enclosed garden. There is a garage accessible from the utility room and off street parking/drive. The house will be available to be viewed as part of the interview.

Chaplains may use the full range of University facilities and services, including library, nursery, sports centre, computing facilities etc. They may join the Staff Common Room and register with the University Health Centre.

The Chapel is the focus for a large, diverse and vibrant worshipping ecumenical Christian community, and as a senior leader of the Church there is a genuine occupational requirement that the person appointed as Chaplain is a Christian.

Stipend/salary will be agreed in line with successful candidate's denominational guidelines and conditions.

### **Date of interview: Sunday 28th and Monday 29th July 2024**

Candidates are strongly encouraged to join us for our morning services from 10.15 followed by lunch at 1.30. If commitments do not permit this, an afternoon arrival time can be arranged.

Deadline for applications: **12noon on Monday 8th July**

Completed applications to: [vacancies@keele.ac.uk](mailto:vacancies@keele.ac.uk)

Enquiries via [chaplaincy@keele.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@keele.ac.uk)

Shortlisting will take place by Friday 12th July.

