A New Vision for Chaplaincy at Liverpool Hope University

Rooted in Faith, Building Community, Transforming Lives

Introduction

This vision sits within the University's revised strategic plan and seeks to proactively contribute to all three aims, with a particular focus on transformative education, underpinned by our Christian foundation and a commitment to the common good. At a time when many students and staff experience loneliness, anxiety, uncertainty, social division and a search for meaning, the role of chaplaincy is more important than ever. Chaplaincy at Hope aims to ensure that amidst academic ambition and institutional activity, the dignity, wellbeing and spiritual flourishing of every person remain at the heart of University life. To do this it needs to engage with more students and staff, not only on campus in normal working hours. With the growth of social media, digital communication and increasingly varied student cohorts, our Chaplaincy needs to be ready to engage students and staff where they are and where they feel comfortable, on our campuses or online.

This paper proposes a vision for chaplaincy that builds upon existing strengths and positions the Chaplaincy as a central contributor to Liverpool Hope University's mission, vision and student experience.

Chaplaincy as the Heartbeat of Community

The most significant contribution that chaplaincy offers is not programmes or events, but relationships. The future Chaplaincy should therefore be understood first and foremost as a ministry of presence. Chaplains will be visible, approachable and engaged across the University's campuses, and its digital communities, at different times of the day and week, ensuring that students and staff see chaplaincy not as a building but as a living network of care and support.

The following principles will underpin the future chaplaincy, building on the work undertaken by our recent/current chaplains:

1. A Distinctively Christian and Ecumenical Chaplaincy

Liverpool Hope's Christian foundation remains central to its identity. Chaplaincy should therefore confidently articulate and celebrate the University's Christian heritage while ensuring that this identity is expressed through hospitality, service and openness.

2. A Chaplaincy of Hospitality and Belonging

One of the greatest challenges facing contemporary higher education is student isolation. Increasing numbers of our students commute, study away from our campuses, balance employment and caring responsibilities, or arrive from different cultures. Some

struggle to develop a sense of belonging. The future Chaplaincy must develop further as one of the University's principal spaces of hospitality and digital belonging.

3. **A Chaplaincy for the Whole University**

Chaplaincy exists for everyone. Whilst rooted in Christian faith, its pastoral ministry extends to people of every faith and none. The Chaplaincy should be a trusted resource for all members of the University community regardless of their beliefs. It should continue to develop strong relationships with students and staff from different faith traditions and none, creating opportunities for mutual understanding, friendship and learning.

4. **A Digital Chaplaincy for a Connected Generation**

Today's students inhabit both physical and digital spaces. The future Chaplaincy must therefore develop a strong digital presence that complements face-to-face ministry and extends its reach beyond campus boundaries. The objective is not to replace personal encounter but to ensure that chaplaincy is present wherever students and staff seek connection, guidance or support.

5. **A Chaplaincy Committed to Justice and the Common Good**

Christian faith is inherently outward-looking. Chaplaincy must help students and staff connect faith, values and action. It should encourage individuals to reflect not only on personal wellbeing but also on their responsibilities towards others and in doing so it should be a focus for social justice activities, supporting the University's commitment to use our position as an anchor institution to serve the common good.

Strategic Priorities

To realise this vision, Chaplaincy should focus on five key priorities; how it will do this is set out in the appendix. The priorities are:

1. Deepening Faith

Providing innovative opportunities for prayer, worship, spiritual growth and Christian formation, face-to-face and online.

2. Growing Belonging

Creating welcoming, inclusive communities where every person feels valued, connected and supported, including virtual communities.

3. Extending Pastoral Care

Offering visible, accessible and responsive support to students and staff across all campuses and with a digital presence.

4. Advancing Social Justice

Encouraging service, volunteering and practical action in support of the common good.

5. Strengthening Partnerships

Building/extending relationships with churches, cathedrals, faith communities, charities, schools and civic organisations throughout Liverpool and beyond, contributing to the University's strategy for external engagement.

Conclusion

The future of Chaplaincy at Liverpool Hope University should be ambitious, confident, integrated and deeply rooted in the institution's founding and current visions.

It should be a Chaplaincy that is prayerful without being insular, Christian without being exclusive, welcoming without being passive, and prophetic without losing compassion.

In a world marked by fragmentation, Liverpool Hope's Chaplaincy can stand as a powerful sign of what universities are ultimately for: not simply the transmission of knowledge, but the formation of people, the strengthening of communities and the nurturing of hope.

Dr Wendy Bignold
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Appendix

A Plan for a New Chaplaincy

This appendix sets out how the Chaplaincy will fulfil its priorities and meet the principles underpinning it. Examples of different areas of the University it will collaborate with are included. These are examples and are given here to emphasise the inclusive, integrated and collaborative work of the chaplains.

A Distinctively Christian and Ecumenical Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy should provide opportunities for:

- Daily prayer.
- Anglican and Catholic worship, regular Mass and sacramental life.
- Ecumenical services and celebrations.
- Spiritual accompaniment.
- Faith formation and discipleship.
- Retreats and pilgrimage opportunities.

A Chaplaincy of Hospitality and Belonging

The chaplains should offer the University community:

- Welcoming physical environments, collaborating with Estates.
- Informal opportunities for connection.
- Shared meals and community gatherings, supporting the Right to Food initiative.
- Student-led initiatives, working with the SU.
- Intergenerational activities, partnering with Hope in the Community.
- Peer support and friendship networks.

A Chaplaincy for the Whole University

This will be facilitated by:

- Pastoral support during crises, collaborating with Student Life.
- Listening and accompaniment.
- Support with bereavement and loss, alongside People Services & Student Life.
- Wellbeing initiatives.
- Celebratory and commemorative events.

- Community-building activities.
- Supporting faith societies, collaborating with the SU.
- Developing multifaith prayer facilities, supporting the Islamic Society.
- Facilitating dialogue and discussion.
- Organising visits to places of worship.
- Celebrating religious festivals appropriately, collaborating with the Global Centre and Catering.
- Promoting respect across areas of difference.

A Digital Chaplaincy for a Connected Generation

Digital chaplaincy will include:

- Social media engagement, collaborating with Corporate Comms & Marketing.
- Online prayer resources.
- Digital reflections and podcasts, working with the Teaching & Learning technologists.
- Virtual pastoral availability, collaborating with Student Life.
- Livestreamed worship where appropriate.
- Creative online faith content.

A Chaplaincy Committed to Justice and the Common Good

The next phase of chaplaincy should deepen this work through:

- Social justice programmes, collaborating with academic schools.
- Volunteering opportunities, partnering with Careers & Employability.
- Environmental stewardship initiatives, supporting the Right to Food initiative.
- Community partnerships.
- Public lectures and discussion forums.
- Advocacy for vulnerable communities, working with the SU.