

Unfamiliar paths



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"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will lead them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16).

It has been a real privilege to work as a chaplain for the past 10 years in Antrim and Craigavon Area hospitals. Every day as I walk along the corridors and get to greet, chat, and at times pray with staff members, I am thankful to God for opening up the opportunity to be involved in this particular pastoral work and to be a part of the unique community within our hospitals. I am thankful too that God promises to equip those he has called into the work he has for them to do.

On my journey towards chaplaincy God graciously provided a number of confirmations that this was the path that he was leading me to be on. So daily I call on him to fulfil his promise to make me able and thank him that he is faithful to do so. He has also provided the support of chaplaincy colleagues and opportunities for training and encouragement, particularly through membership of the Northern Ireland Healthcare Chaplaincy Association (NIHCA).

The last few years have obviously seen all of us walk along unfamiliar paths and, for some, they have been particularly rough. For those who have had to enter into hospital, leaving loved ones at home, it was a privilege as a chaplain to act as a bridge between

family members and also to bring the gentle but very real reminder of an almighty, loving Father who is with us wherever we are and who "[hems us] in, behind and before" (Psalm 139:5).

The Lord's promise to his people Israel, as recorded in Isaiah 42, is one that he has been reminding me of more and more over

recent weeks. Thankfully, while ways within the hospitals are gradually returning to something more akin to 'normal' and visiting by family, friends and community pastoral workers is much more

possible, there are still unfamiliar paths to be walked for many of those who are admitted on to the wards.

As I spend time with people who are waiting for tests and results, or those who are about to embark on an unknown and (what can feel like) an overwhelming journey of ongoing treatment, I'm reminded that the Lord wants us to look to him with expectation that he will fulfil his promises – promises to go before us and lead us as we look to him, promises to turn the darkness into light and to make the rough places smooth. Our Father God, full of compassion, will never forsake us.

Please pray:

- For hospital staff in their tireless work, and for opportunities to encourage them.
- For the Holy Spirit to lead me in each day, so that I may cross paths with those he wants me to encounter.