

David is the Managing Chaplain for a multi-faith chaplaincy team at HMP Onley. He shares his story as part of #ChristianUnity.

I am David Spademan, a Free Church (Assemblies of God) Prison Chaplain employed as the Managing Chaplain at HMP Onley, a Category C Training Prison. I have the privilege of leading a Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Team who have been caring for staff and residents through the pandemic.

Chaplain standing outside a blue prison door

Whilst we have not been able to lead corporate worship since March last year, as prison chaplains we have been working at the front line throughout the lockdown restrictions. Although many colleagues have now returned to work, at the start of the lockdown the majority of our partner organisations and volunteers were not allowed into the prison. Each day prison officers, governors, medical staff and chaplains have consistently been coming in: essential workers as identified in the Prisons Act 1952.

Our Chaplaincy department have maintained a consistent presence, seeing all new residents and visiting those who are vulnerable or experiencing bereavement. Maintaining Covid-19 safety precautions, we have been able to bring individuals to the Chapel to light a candle and pray together. The team has provided weekly written faith reflections for those who have asked for them, and structured regular visits to each residential unit.

I often say that chaplaincy is the greatest ministry this side of heaven. Knowing that God has called me to this ministry gives me the strength to continue supporting others. Chaplaincy is essentially an incarnational ministry – being there with others to bring hope and comfort.

Prison staff, including chaplains, are demonstrating incredible resilience. Many are really tired, but persevering. Please pray for physical and emotional strength for all who live and work in our prisons. As I write this, one of my team is isolating after testing positive for Covid-19. Please pray for healing, for protection and for vaccinations for prison staff to be prioritised.

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Can you find #TimeToPray for Christian unity, the work of chaplains, and all those who live and work in prisons?

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