

## General note about ministry in Permanent Chaplaincies



Intercontinental Church Society has been ministering to English-speaking people since 1823. It has evangelical roots and convictions and is one of the official mission agencies of the Church of England. Although its major work is in Europe, there are other chaplaincies in South America, North Africa and the Middle East. In all cases chaplains are licensed by the Bishop of the Diocese in which they are working.

Chaplaincy ministry has particular stresses as well as joys and these should be seriously considered before applying. The main stresses are being far from home and family and this applies usually and particularly to the chaplain's spouse who, if he/she does not speak the language of the country, can feel very alone. Employment opportunities for the spouse may be limited. In most chaplaincies fellow Anglican clergy are far away and whilst the phone can be a help in a crisis, the sort of the fellowship enjoyed with other clergy in one's home country is far more difficult to come by. Adaptation to a different culture and way of life, of food, temperature and shopping facilities, whilst a pleasure on holiday, can be quite testing when you live there. In most chaplaincies there is a fast turnover of membership in the congregation as people's work moves them on to other countries. There is usually a core of longer-term residents and nationals as well, but this is variable.

However, in addition to support offered by Dioceses, ICS seeks to provide extra support by way of regular contact, visits, a world-wide prayer network and an annual conference for all chaplains and their spouses and families.

Also, the variety of life with the congregation, the mixture of nationality and culture (as most chaplaincies are multi-national) can be extremely stimulating. The congregation will include many denominations.

Although chaplains will need to be flexible in their approach to the forms of service and ministry that will meet widely varied needs, there are particular opportunities for evangelism and pastoral care with people far from home. Many are more open to the Gospel, many will come to the Church for the first time for whatever reason, and many do not have the ties of family, garden etc that keep them from Church activities when they are back home.

The Society has written Agreements with its chaplains and terms of service vary depending on need and circumstances. The chaplain's remuneration (for a stipendiary appointment) is normally approximately equivalent to an incumbent's in England. Furnished or unfurnished accommodation is provided in both stipendiary and 'house-for-duty' appointments. UK standards of accommodation are usually higher.

In view of the above, ICS-supported chaplains need to be people with evangelical convictions, have a mature and steady faith, who preferably have already had experience of incumbent or similar level, and like change and challenge. Unless there is willingness for children to be educated within the local system, or the chaplain and spouse have private means that they are prepared to expend on education elsewhere, people with children who are still in mainstream education need to consider this matter particularly carefully. Working with ICS ought not to be seen as an offshore English parish - it can be a challenging, broadening and intensely enriching experience.