



## Annual Report 2023-24

The **West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council** exists to:

- **Support colleges** in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and the training and resourcing of staff in matters of faith and spirituality
- **Support churches** in valuing further education and lifelong learning as part of their wider involvement in education, and providing resources and training to partner colleges in their work.

The Council is composed of representatives from across different Christian churches represented in the West Midlands region, including individuals with years of experience working within the FE and lifelong learning sectors (see p. 5). Though rooted in the Christian tradition, the Council takes an open and positive approach to working with people of any faith and none.

The Council initiates projects, organises training and networking events, and networks chaplains and other FE staff in the West Midlands region. It can also assist in brokering partnerships between colleges, churches and other faith communities.

West Midlands Churches' FE Council was founded in 1987 and is currently the only regionally-based ecumenical organisation supporting Christian engagement in the further education sector and support to colleges.



[www.wmcfec.org.uk](http://www.wmcfec.org.uk)



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# The Year in Brief

## West Midlands FE Chaplaincy Ambassador

The West Midlands is currently unique amongst the regions of the UK in having a paid Further Education chaplaincy development post, jointly funded by four local denominational bodies (the Anglican dioceses of Coventry and Lichfield, the Heart of England Baptist Association and the WM Synod of the URC) and by St Peter's Saltley Trust. **The WM FE Chaplaincy Ambassador is Nigel Roberts**, an experienced education chaplain and tutor in chaplaincy and educational issues for iCYM. WM Churches' FE Council are represented on the project advisory group and work in partnership with Nigel. 2023-24 saw the continuation of a post-Covid growth of interest in FE chaplaincy in the region - in large part a reflection of college's desire to support students' mental health and wellbeing. The chaplaincy established at City of Wolverhampton College in 2023 has continued to establish itself. Chaplaincy at Dudley College remains an imminent prospect provided a suitable chaplain can be found. Meanwhile, Nigel Roberts and Ian Jones from WMC FEC ran stalls at the college at the beginning of the exam period, with good results.



Detailed conversations are underway regarding the establishment of chaplaincy at Birmingham Metropolitan College. Freshers' Week saw a popular stall run at the college by Nigel Roberts and award-winning Christian-Muslim youth work organisation The Feast (pictured, who have been regular visitors to the college since).

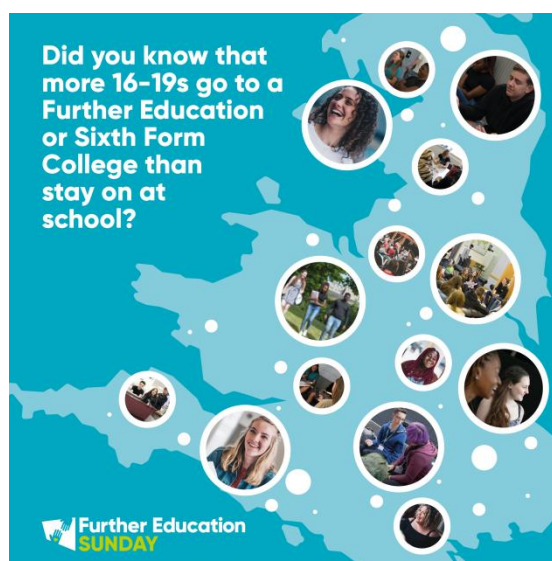
Nigel Roberts regularly attends and supports the work of the Safer Students group of West Midlands Colleges. Nigel has also taken part in events organised by the region's denominational bodies to promote understanding of the FE sector as a sphere of Christian ministry and service. The WM FE Chaplaincy Ambassador initiative works according to the [Core Standards for Christian Chaplaincy with Children and Young People](#).

**A key current need is for more chaplains and churches interested in supporting their local FE college. There are currently more Colleges wanting to establish chaplaincy than churches seeking to offer it**, and in some cases promising conversations around chaplaincy are under threat from lack of candidates coming forward to be chaplains. Addressing this is a key priority for 2024-25.

**Developing a framework for authorising, training and supervising chaplains also remains a need.** Most FE chaplains are not employees of their college, so some form of joint authorisation/supervisory arrangement (plus supporting paperwork such as service-level agreements) is required. Such arrangements give colleges confidence in their chaplains, provide proper support to chaplains themselves, and clarity of purpose/expectations for local churches. Some options are due to be explored in Spring/Summer 2024.

West Midlands Churches' FE Council would like to express continued thanks to funders for their commitment to developing chaplaincy in further education through this project. The FE Chaplaincy Ambassador role has been extended for a further year due to new commitments of funding from the Bishop of Birmingham's Charitable Fund and St Peter's Saltley Trust **A key priority for 2024-25 will be to secure further funding to extend the Chaplaincy Ambassador role beyond April 2025.**

## Further Education Sunday 2024



Further Education Sunday was created by FE Chaplaincy Ambassador Nigel Roberts and WM Churches' FE Council as focus for churches to begin to pray for and learn more about their local Further Education College. In the process it seeks to raise the profile of the FE sector amongst the churches and offering them a challenge and encouragement to engage and serve their local college.

FE Sunday is an annual event, held in partnership with Festive ([www.festive.org.uk](http://www.festive.org.uk)). Resources including videos, prayer cards and worship resources are available at: [www.fe-sunday.uk](http://www.fe-sunday.uk). This year, on 12 May, FE Sunday will be featured for the first time in the Church of England's weekly online service:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-church-online/weekly-online-services>

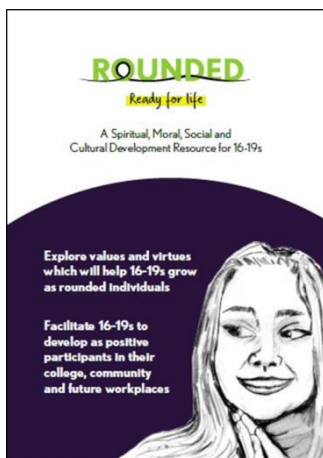
## Emerging Areas of Project Work

With many challenges now facing the Further Education sector and its staff and students, the Council has continued to develop other projects:

- **Collaboration between churches and colleges to provide work experience/work placement opportunities for students.** With youth unemployment rising, colleges are keen to ensure students gain real-world experience to give them a head start in the world of work. Churches and church community projects often need additional help to enable them to serve their communities. How might these two needs/opportunities be brought together? Work has begun to create a short guide to churches and colleges seeking to work in partnership in this area. **We are currently with with various local college staff and Christian charities and churches to write case studies of projects where churches and colleges have offered work placement opportunities together** – to help bring the guide alive and offer some practical examples of what might be possible.
- The Council is exploring further work around the contribution of (Christian) spirituality to young people's mental health and wellbeing, and exploring what if any further resources or training are needed around conflict resolution from a faith perspective.

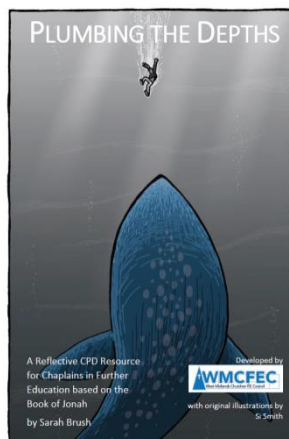
## Our Website, E-News and other Resources

Resources commissioned/produced by WMCFEC are found at: <http://wmcfec.org.uk/resource-downloads/>



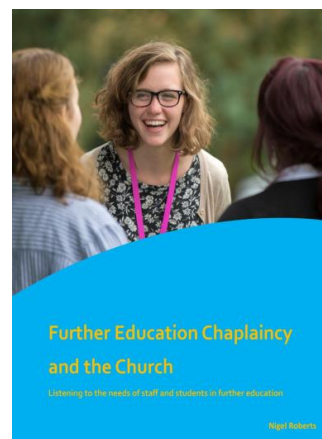
### ROUNDED: Ready for Life

SMSC Development Resource for 16-19s in College (2021)



### Plumbing the Depths

Reflective CPD resource for FE chaplains based on Jonah (2016)



### FE Chaplaincy and the Church

Report based on conversations FE staff and students (2023)



### WMCFEC's Introduction to FE Chaplaincy Videos

(2019) have been widely praised for providing a short, high-quality, accessible introduction to FE and the work that chaplains do with their colleges. The five, two-minute videos are:

1. Introduction to FE Chaplaincy
2. What is a Further Education College?
3. What is Further Education Chaplaincy?
4. What can FE Chaplaincy look like?
5. How can I get involved?

Watch on the WMCFEC YouTube channel [here](#).



### FE Sunday Materials

Created by Nigel Roberts, we now have a variety of short filmed interviews with college staff and students, talking about their experience of studying and working in FE, student need and the role of chaplaincy.

These can be found via the FE Sunday website: [www.fe-sunday.uk](http://www.fe-sunday.uk)



## Plans for 2024-25

In 2024-25 the Council will:

- Seek to support the development of new structures of supervision, accountability and training for FE chaplains, in partnership with colleges, local churches and workplace chaplaincy organisations, in conversation with other regional partners. This will include:
  - Developing a draft framework for discerning a call to FE chaplaincy
  - Exploring with the new WorkCare West Midlands workplace chaplaincy organisation possibilities for working in partnership around the endorsement, insurance and training of FE chaplains
- Continue to support the work of the West Midlands FE Chaplaincy Ambassador – exploring options for extending the role beyond May 2025 and continuing support for new and existing chaplaincies.
- Continue to support the development of Further Education Sunday
- Complete the introductory guide to setting up church-based work placement and volunteering opportunities for college students
- Continue to publicise existing WMC FEC resources - including ROUNDED: Ready for Life, the *FE Chaplaincy Videos* and *Plumbing the Depths* – through the Council’s e-news bulletin and other channels.
- Develop new projects to meet the religious and spiritual needs of FE students and staff and those who work with them in chaplaincy and other roles. In particular this will include how to share resources/develop new work around peacemaking, conflict resolution, developing empathy with others and overcoming polarisation.
- Involve new people in the work of the Council, continuing to build good relationships with other organisations working with the further education sector and supporting churches’ work in education.

## People

In 2024-25 the following served as members of the Council (\* = joining, + = retiring):

Name	Expertise	Representing
Revd Stephen Blyth	Chaplain at North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College	Co-opted member
Katy Broomfield	Head of Learner Services & Customer Experience, Burton and South Derbyshire College	Co-opted member
Rosie Bryant	Experienced trainer and assessor in FE and business sectors, Learning and Development Officer with the Methodist Church in the West Midlands region.	Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District
Pete Carrington	Director, Festive (FE and Sixth Form Initiative)	Festive
Lynne Hayes-James (Hon. Treasurer)	Administrator and Clerk to Trustees, St Peter’s Saltley Trust	Co-opted member
Simon Hill	Programme Lead for Children, Youth and Families	Anglican Diocese of Worcester
Rt Revd Anne Hollinghurst	Bishop of Aston and a former HE chaplain	WM Church Leaders
Ian Jones (Hon. Sec.)	Director, St Peter’s Saltley Trust	St Peter’s Saltley Trust
Revd Naomi Nixon	CEO of Student Christian Movement, former FE college chaplain	SCM
Nigel Roberts	West Midlands FE Chaplaincy Ambassador, tutor at the Institute for Children, Youth and Mission	Co-opted

Beccy Roseman	Secondary Schools Chaplaincy Adviser	RC Archdiocese of Birmingham
Jill Saunders	Partner at Wentworth Education Associates	Anglican Diocese of Birmingham
Rev Claire Turner (* )	Research Chaplain to Bishop of Aston	Attending

Representatives are sought for: the Anglican Dioceses of Coventry, Hereford and Lichfield, Birmingham Methodist District, Chester and Stoke Methodist District, Heart of England Baptist Association, the Council of Black-Majority Churches, Central England Quakers, WM Synod of the URC and up to two further co-opted members.

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