



I'm Rev Steve Clarke and I'm SSM Curate in the Chapelfields hub of Church Wigan.

My pathway into Waterways Chaplaincy began during Ordination Training in 2018 when my Director of Studies encouraged me to explore a placement within an area I might have an added interest in. All my life I have lived within close proximity of the Leeds/Liverpool Canal and it just so happened that my eye was drawn to an article in the Church Times mentioning this area of chaplaincy. I won't dwell on the processes but it soon became apparent that I had a choice to make; do I experience this chaplaincy just to satisfy the placement criteria or do I wholly embrace it? The fact that a few years down the line I am still here gives a clue to which option I took!

Having served firstly as a probationary, then as commissioned chaplain, I now have the deeper privilege of being invited to serve as a Senior Chaplain. Although the geographic area is still to be finalised it seems practical that I will have responsibility for waters north of the Mersey estuary.



This may be the idyllic scene you imagine when you think of the waterways, and, thankfully, for the vast majority of the waterways community it is something similar.

However, within the community there is also abject poverty and hardship. Some take to the water seeking a reclusive lifestyle whilst having untreated mental illness which manifests itself in a squalid existence.

Those who live aboard either rent long term moorings or have to secure a continuous cruiser permit, requiring them to move on every 14 days. This often means that a struggling live aboard boater does not have a postcode.

Without a postcode it is difficult to register with a GP, claim benefits, tax a vehicle or open a current bank account. Choosing this way of life does not always give access to schools, medical facilities or other amenities; and these problems are compounded when bereavement, depression, illness or unemployment occurs.

Waterways Chaplains find themselves alongside the vulnerable providing pastoral support and practical care and guidance.

## WHO ARE WE?



We are Christian volunteers from local churches coming from a diversity of Christian traditions including both lay people and ordained ministers. Some have a background of boating, whilst others had no previous experience of inland waterways. Volunteer chaplains are facilitated by experienced Senior Chaplains whose task is to build up teams and provide training and mentoring support, including prayer!

Waterways Chaplaincy is an ecumenical activity of Workplace Matters.

## COULD THIS MINISTRY BE FOR ME?

So, you are a Christian, a good listener and able to walk a mile of waterways a week? You don't have to own a boat but you can walk with your dog!

Being a volunteer chaplain is challenging and rewarding but never dull. Is God talking to you about a ministry out of the four walls of the church building, being His feet, hands and voice in a very special community?

A helpful Youtube clip is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mDTz7Gr1o8&t=12s>

If you would like an informal chat I can be reached on 07958077549.

**Also further information can be gathered from our website**  
[www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk)

