Standing Down

There can be many reasons why a Volunteer will leave service of the Cathedral. Sometimes volunteers move house to be nearer to family or sometimes they can simply no longer carry out their duties owning to health issues or their partner may become so ill that they need more care. So, what happens to Volunteers after they leave the Cathedral?

It is good practice to try to maintain contact with these people some of whom may have given many years, sometimes decades, of their time to the Cathedral

The difficulty, of course, is finding both the time and financial resources. However, it does seem right to offer them the opportunity to stay in touch and not lose connection with a place that, for some, has been their life. One Cathedral offers volunteers ‘Alumni’ or an ‘Emeritus’ status and the chance to come in and chat with tea and cakes and sometimes a speaker to add interest to the occasion. Another has offered a games morning, providing card and board games as well as tea and biscuits. A coffee morning with a quiz is also much appreciated by active and retired volunteers alike.

Needless to say, there will be some volunteers who may find it difficult to come in owing to mobility or other issues; however, you can pass support to the Clergy or your Pastoral Care team who will have the appropriate DBS clearance to visit them in their homes. A phone call from time to time to some may be appropriate – the knowledge that they are not forgotten will mean much.

Certainly, a ‘Thank you’ letter or a certificate of appreciation signed by the Dean is simple and, if funds allow, a small parting present would not go amiss. So too a mention in the Sunday service and Volunteers Newsletter if you have one; both are easy, public acknowledgements for people who have contributed much to Cathedral life.

Ultimately, these are not difficult things to do but they are human things to do, they are the right things to do.

Of course, there will also come a time when you should consider standing a volunteer down. It is easier to do this if you can have open discussions with volunteers and keep the topic at surface level - early, gentle intervention usually proves more fruitful than a forced situation late on. It may also mean that your volunteer can continue for longer because you can arrange either a different role or put in place reasonable adjustments to allow them to carry on that bit longer.

Avoiding embarrassment is the key and planning with the volunteer will help enormously. Discuss with them the possibility of reducing their session time or providing a chair or whatever a suitable adjustment may be….

This is an extract from one Cathedral handbook which you may find helpful.

*“When it’s time to stop*

*If your circumstances change and you no longer wish to volunteer with the Cathedral, please give your Team Leader and/ or the Volunteer Coordinator as much notice as possible and, where possible, fulfil any pre-existing commitments you have.*

*There may also come a time when either you or the Cathedral feel the role you are undertaking is no longer right or possible for you. You can talk to the Volunteer Coordinator to see if any other more suitable roles are available, but if not, then you will be invited to step back from active service. We hope that you will continue to enjoy the friendships you have made and belong to the wider Cathedral community.*

*All volunteers are offered an informal meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator when they leave in order to provide feedback and to help the Cathedral continue to improve its volunteer programme.”*