Dear Friends,

In many ways, it feels as if we are living in fragile times at present. Internationally there are concerns about the behaviour of world leaders and the impact on nations relating to each other. Nationally it appears no-one can quite make any decisions in politics and by the time of going to press, who knows what changes will have occurred. Chaplains are used to working with tensions, uncertainties and change, but it feels as if the backdrop to our personal and working lives is a very blurred landscape. Through various conversations at our executive meetings and regional groups, I am aware that many of our members continue to face uncertainty about the future shape of their role, working hours, team leadership etc. Whether we work in hospices or the NHS, there is a lot to think about and manage at an organizational level, let alone our day-to-day work.

The AHPCC was created and exists to be a supportive network to chaplains in palliative care. It is the ‘special interest group’ for this area of healthcare chaplaincy, yet the executive is aware that our membership has not been sustained at a level previously held. I am aware that chaplains are pulled in various directions about which organizations to join, given that each has a membership fee and requires input from members. Given the choice of appropriate organisations (AHPCC, CHCC, UKBHC), each has a distinct function and purpose that is valuable but for palliative care chaplains, the AHPCC is the one most able to provide networking, support and a valuable training conference. I would urge you to do the following: join yourself, if you aren’t already a member; encourage your volunteers to join as associate members; inform our membership secretary about any changes you are aware of; and pass on the information to your successor if you are leaving your post. The executive also appreciates your thoughts and feedback on how best the organisation can support chaplains in ways not already happening. We are hoping to concentrate support through regional groups, particularly for networking opportunities and reflective practice, and we would value your thoughts on how your regional group works.

‘The Shape of Chaplaincy’ is our conference theme for 2019, and it should be yet another excellent opportunity to come together. The shape is constantly changing and we need to encourage and support each other through the speed of how change is occurring. The conference will be, as ever, a time of reflection, training and learning, as well as a sustaining level of caring for each other. For those new to post, you’ll be glad you came!

Three hospices are signed up to participate in the European research PROM project, looking at the value of chaplaincy in a variety of settings. It’s great that the AHPCC is supporting this and being part of the research. It’s just one of the ways we can influence the shape of the future and maintain the high level of practice and support that palliative care chaplains offer.

Every blessing for a peaceful Christmas and New Year,

Karen

Karen Murphy

AHPCC President