



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 1, 2010

## Christian Nurse Faces Discriminatory Policies in England

A nurse in England is claiming discrimination after hospital policy punishes her for wearing a crucifix to work. Shirley Chaplin, a 54-year old Christian nurse at the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Trust Hospital in England, was moved into an office position after refusing to remove her crucifix. Nurse Chaplin claimed that removing her crucifix would “violate her faith.”



On two separate occasions in the summer of 2009, senior matrons Julie Vale and Alison Wootton asked Nurse Chaplin to remove her crucifix. After the second request was ignored, Chaplin was invited to a meeting where she was told that she would face “disciplinary sanction” if she continued to wear her crucifix.

The hospital asserts that the policy has nothing to do with the crucifix itself, but that wearing the necklace violates health safety concerns. Nurses are prohibited from wearing necklaces during their shift, as they pose a threat from patients who grab necklaces during procedures and checkups.

When questioned as to whether wearing a necklace to the hospital can pose a health or safety risk, she responded it “might be.” On the other hand, Chaplin asserts that several other nurses wore necklaces without harassment from the hospital administrators.

Nurse Chaplin believes that she was targeted as a Christian. She counters the hospital’s claims that the decision was for safety reasons by remarking, “I have been a nurse for roughly 30 years and throughout that time I have worn my crucifix.”

Chaplin prepared a 71-point statement to the tribunal in Exeter, her hometown, explaining that she was “personally convicted” for wearing this emblem of her faith.

Having owned the crucifix since 1971, after she received it as a Confirmation gift, Chaplin argues, “The crucifix is an exceptionally important expression of my faith and my belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. To deliberately remove or hide my crucifix or to treat it disrespectfully would violate my faith.” In her statement, Chaplin identified four primary reasons for why she believes it is imperative to wear the crucifix, particularly since it acts as a reminder to her and to others about the ultimate sacrifice.

Chaplin explains that wearing the crucifix was not an issue until the hospital switched to a new style of uniforms, though the old style did not prevent visibility of the crucifix either. Recommendations for Chaplin to pin the crucifix to the inside of her uniform were rejected by Chaplin, who perceived this suggestion as an invitation to hide her faith.



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Chaplin was told that the crucifix was not a “mandatory requirement” of her faith. She disagrees and therefore accepted the redeployment.

In response to Nurse Chaplin’s transfer to an office position, six bishops, along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, penned a letter to the Sunday *Telegraph* combating the “apparent discrimination” against churchgoers.

If the hospital’s decision was indeed motivated by anti-Christian sentiments, Christians in England have cause for concern. Once such feelings dictate company policies, Christians will continue to face further intolerance in the workplace and receive little protection against discriminatory behavior.



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