

Chaplains in university life: A retrospective¹

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Abstract

Having been a chaplain to two universities (1992 – 2006), I reflect on some of the principles I learned and some of the ways I believe that chaplains can effectively interact within a university environment. The principles are identified under themes such as professional service, working with the sacred, compassion, translation, mediation and protection, and importantly for the university context, intellectual integrity. The argument is that while there may be some generic elements to chaplaincy, the university environment requires specific skill sets that make chaplaincy in this context unique when compared with other chaplaincies (e.g. hospitals or schools).

Keywords

Chaplaincy in higher education, chaplaincy roles, community intellectual integrity, spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Religion has the singular effect of dividing people, yet its aim is the exact opposite. It's meant to give direction to the lost soul, yet it throws many people into confusion. The experience of faith is intended to provide comfort, yet the mere mention of it arouses the deepest suspicions of the spiritually alienated. The very same things

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could be said about love. But we would not on that account give away the possibility to love ... Religion has always been tested and always found wanting, which is why it has never stood still but has been a hotbed of controversy, innovation and striving like every other aspect of human endeavour. ... And yet, the last thirty years of religious innovation have witnessed a distinct preference for the inward, self-focused spiritual awakening associated with the mystics over the socially constructive and politically directed expressions of the churches. (Kohn 2003:1-3)

Both the context and nature of higher education are changing rapidly (Sheehan 2000), as a consequence the diversity of campus populations is shifting significantly with increasing emphasis on students from ever more diverse origins and cultures (Bradley 2008). This diversity often impacts into larger classes, wider requirements of support services (e.g. English language and study skills support), and expanding courses. Assumptions once taken for granted such as the prerequisite knowledge students should have are now often found wanting.

In recent years increasing government policy focus has been on attracting socially and economically disadvantaged students and regional students to university. In response, campuses have further diversified and more campuses have been developed in regional areas (Bradley 2008). There has also been emphasis on expanding post-graduate course work and professional degrees.

The push for internationalisation has led beyond simply recruiting international students to Australia for their studies. Overseas campuses have also been developed, welcomed as an opportunity for education expansion by their respective governments and as business opportunities for the university. With increasing internationalisation, universities have ever larger numbers of students originating from ever more countries and bringing with them a diversity of languages, cultures, and understandings of the world. This creates a rich intermingling of people unlikely to be found elsewhere and produces challenges often specific to this environment. Increasingly also there is electronically based interaction where students spend more time outside the bounds of the physical campus yet have access to vast arrays of resources through creative application of technology.

The university environment is now measured according to almost every perceivable standard. Student feedback, for instance, has become a vital metric for universities to measure satisfaction and effectiveness. Emphasis on research is measured through 'outputs' and 'impacts' (e.g., of publications produced) and by the value of funding attracted. The idea of the measurement of everything from academic productivity to student satisfaction has become all pervasive and is infrequently questioned. The data are used to rate, scale and evaluate universities. In turn, the institutions aspire to be at the top of identified scales and work to achieve this.

This context creates considerable challenges for chaplaincy to remain relevant and at the same time provides opportunities for broadening its scope. Many changes occurring in

campus communities are reflected in chaplaincy services (Van Gronningen 2001). While some traditional Christian approaches to chaplaincy continue, there has been a growth of new approaches. Chaplains representing traditions other than Christianity – Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Baha’i and the like - are increasingly widely represented on university campuses. Some chaplaincies now identify themselves as multifaith (Boyce 2002) and some have Multi-Faith Centres constructed on campus (Blundell 2002). In this context it is imperative to revisit some basic questions in relation to university chaplaincy: Who or what is a chaplain? What do chaplains do? What does it mean to have a chaplain at a university? What attributes does chaplaincy add to campus life?

RELIGION AND THE UNIVERSITY

Australian universities are, on the whole, proudly secular. It is, however, not entirely clear what is meant by this, beyond perhaps a sense of broad tolerance of all views, avoidance of being aligned with specific denominational religion and relegating spirituality largely to the personal domain (Carnley 2002). This idea of secularism is perhaps more accurately a kind of religious agnosticism. Even in this secular environment, many Australian universities teach and conduct research in religious studies, theology or spirituality. Academic communities are used to being engaged in discussion and dialogue about beliefs and values. However, when it comes to the language used about the spiritual there is often a gap in understanding - an incommensurability gap. Terms such as ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ tend to be used with a plurality of meanings such that it is often unclear exactly what is meant. It is not uncommon to hear a distinction drawn between organised religion (a faith tradition or denomination) and spirituality (relating to an individual person’s views, experiences and deeply held beliefs) (Tacey 2002, 2003). This distinction is not always helpful as it obscures numerous philosophical issues, yet it seems to be commonly accepted in the language used concerning the spiritual domain. Language weakened by lack of shared understandings needs to be reclaimed, and the chaplain has an important role in this.

The point is that chaplains need to establish clarity about the language and meanings which are used about their subject matter in order to be able to communicate their role and thus enable effectiveness within an academic community. The question is how to ‘translate’ an understanding of chaplaincy to a campus audience. Philosophy, psychology and other areas may provide helpful entry points, but ultimately people are either willing to engage directly with the concerns of spirituality or they are not. The crux, however, is that the chaplain needs to establish this meaning as part of establishing an understanding of the role and impact of a chaplain on campus. Unlike many other kinds of institutions (e.g., hospitals or schools), there is no common understanding of what chaplains do and how or why to connect with them. A common understanding can be achieved formally (e.g., by creating a policy about chaplaincy) or less formally by the interaction and communication of the chaplaincy with the university community. What is important is regular and ongoing communication.

CHAPLAINCY IN UNIVERSITY LIFE

While the origins of chaplaincy lie largely in military history (Bodycomb 1999, von Dietze & Baynes 2005), chaplaincy in higher education has, for centuries, been inseparably linked with the Christian Church and with the religious organisations which founded universities and colleges. Given the expansion and diversity of higher education, it is questionable to what extent the historical metaphors still serve us. Despite this, it is important at least to recognise the history in order to appreciate the full extent of current developments. The central question about chaplains is: Why are they there and what do they contribute to the institution?

Over 70% of the Australian population continue to profess a religious belief (ABS, 2006) even if this belief is fairly loosely held or relatively undefined. Campus populations probably reflect community statistics; however the percentage of religious belief and adherence is likely to be higher among international students. The diversity of beliefs and cultures in Australian society is expanding and on campus is added to by the diversity of the international student population. It is not just the actual numbers that are growing, but the diversity within each tradition that is expanding.

The average campus population these days is often the size of a small city. University life is a little akin to living in a large airport – it is a place that people use to get to somewhere else (Bodycomb 1999). Broadly speaking there are three populations of people journeying – students, academics and administrative staff, although these functions can overlap significantly. There are peak times and low times, people on a journey.

Chaplains on campus need to avoid the stereotypes associated with their role and provide effective service through pastoral support which understands and speaks the language of faith, integrates with university life and opens exploration of new and emerging spiritual issues. Chaplaincy has diversified and expanded to accommodate the multicultural and multifaith nature of our campuses, thus changing the role of the chaplain (Valk 2001) and it is important to ensure that these changes continue to keep pace with the developments of universities and that they are communicated to the campus population.

Chaplaincies typically include pastoral, liturgical (prayer / meditation / worship), intellectual and administrative dimensions and in many cases have a multifaith focus. A frequently asked question is: What does a chaplain *do* in this environment? Perhaps this misses a more subtle and important question: What does a chaplain *represent* in this environment? So often the focus is on the doing, but the spiritual realm requires one to ask also about '*being*'. The *doing* is, in some senses for the chaplain, simply a reflection of the *being*. It is not so much what the chaplain does that counts but what the chaplain represents. And, out of the representing arises the doing. It is within this context of *being* and *doing* that the chaplain provides a complementary and unique service. This use of the terms 'being' and 'doing' is natural to chaplains and assumes a shared understanding, but

it is somewhat like a foreign language to others where the language of religion and spirituality is not understood as readily.

In a busy environment a chaplain is above all someone who has time for others (individuals and groups), time to be a spiritual person, time to assist others to bring into focus some of the tough issues of life, time when crises occur, time to think and reflect, time to pray. Time, above all, to offer to those who come seeking to clarify their own life's journey. However, chaplains will not be automatically sought out by most people but needs to 'market' their availability and skills. This means establishing close working relationships with student services, counselling and other campus services and also being known to key area managers and enquiries personnel. Where the chaplain is located and how the chaplain is linked into the system all assist to establish these connections and provide a clear understanding about how the chaplaincy fits into university life.

This does not answer the question about who or what a chaplain actually is, it simply points to how a chaplaincy could be integrated. Who or what a chaplain is very much revolves around the specific training of chaplains and the individual's style when working in the university context. However, there are shared professional elements which together identify the unique elements that chaplains offer to university life. In what follows I try to set out some of these. I recognise that chaplains frequently work part time and / or in teams and as such my comments need to be integrated into each specific framework.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Chaplaincy is a profession in two senses of the term (Fitzgerald 1999) – chaplains offer a professional service to the campus community and their presence professes the religious or spiritual values and beliefs they stand for.

Ideally, a chaplain fits seamlessly into university life by being visibly involved and thus becomes accessible to people. In traditional settings where the chaplaincy is focally connected with a worshipping community, the nexus point is provided through the provision of worship. People gravitate to the chaplain through their contact with the worship of the campus community. Today worship is usually no longer at the forefront of the chaplaincy service and chaplains need to seek people out in new ways. It is no longer 'natural' for people to gravitate towards the chaplain. Chaplains can achieve this involvement in many different ways, e.g., participation on university committees (such as ethics committees), working alongside counsellors, participating in student activities, teaching, researching, organising speakers and discussion forums. Such an approach gives the chaplain both formal and informal input into the diverse life of the institution.

As student and staff services within universities become increasingly specialised and as the regulatory environment of the institution produces ever more policies and controls, so the chaplain's opportunities for being the connecting point increase, as long as the chaplain is familiar with the environment and the system and is well known to the people within it.

The chaplain's specialisation is an increasing opportunity to work across traditional boundaries and to connect people with people and with relevant services according to their needs. The core is being known.

WORKING WITH THE SACRED

We have imagined that we have outgrown the sacred, and that notions of soul and spirit are archaisms of a former era. When the hunger for the sacred erupts in our time, we don't know how to respond, and are often unable to determine what is sickness or health, what is wisdom or delusion, in ourselves and others... Spirituality is a major social issue and requires immediate attention ... (Tacey 2003:5)

Most people think it fairly obvious that chaplains will be involved in religious and spiritual domains. Yet, students and staff are all too often unaware about what that actually means. The highly secular expectations of contemporary Australian society tend to relegate the sacred to a secondary place or personal space. Language in the spiritual and religious domains tends, at least in the public sphere, to be difficult due to the diversity of meanings which people attach to terms and concepts³. The sacred is, however, a primary focus for the chaplain who seeks to enable its discovery within the secular and pressured environment of university life.

The question of spirituality and meaning is wider than the university alone; however the university has a particular contribution to make. Contemporary society often questions issues related to spirituality. The failure of materialist values is widely recognised and people search for something to take its place. This raises opportunities for the chaplain to marshal the skills found in a university context and help interpret the meaning and impact of the spiritual for people's lives. Chaplains, by virtue of their training and their role, provide a unique focus to assist others in a spiritual search while also seeking to sustain intellectual frameworks that enable spirituality to be coherently integrated into the whole of life (Tacey 2004).

Many academic questions – ethical, social, philosophical – also have a spiritual dimension to which the chaplain can contribute. This contribution may be within or beyond the classroom. Many universities have courses which address matters of religion and spirituality – some overtly and others more subtly. Fields such as philosophy, psychology or sociology frequently connect with issues that may be termed a '*search for meaning and spirituality*' and are often popular with students (Tacey 2002, 2004). In addition, some universities also offer courses with specific focus on religious studies or theology. In the

³ The question of conceptual meaning and its applications in the religious / spiritual domains warrants a separate exploration. There are significant differences between language utilised, say, in systematic theology (of any religious tradition) compared with the language of popular spirituality. An analysis of relevant publications would make for an interesting contribution to this study.

wider context, higher education by its very nature raises overt spiritual or meaning of life questions. This provides chaplains with opportunities. On the one hand, involvement in the academic or classroom setting (at the invitation of the relevant staff); on the other hand, connecting and engaging students to offer more personal frameworks for students to resolve questions raised in the context of their own lives (Robinson 2002). In the academic environment, search for meaning courses typically do not attempt (indeed it is not their mandate) to provide personalised ways to resolve questions of meaning as this could violate the secular objectives of the institution and the academic objectives of the study. The chaplain, at the nexus between academia and spirituality, is in a unique position to assist students and staff more personally to address the implications of spiritual questions raised intellectually.

Brady (1999) argues that we live in a world where new metaphors of the sacred and spiritual are being created and where traditional metaphors are being given new interpretations. Tacey (2003) takes this point further to argue that a spirituality revolution is occurring which is not about dogma and religious tradition, but rather an experiential desire to connect with an 'Ultimate Other'. However, the problem for many is that their past experience of the religious does not equip them to address these questions and their language resources do not enable them to pursue more deeply the issues for themselves. The chaplain can develop a strong role through participation in discussions which seek to offer people new ways to understand and develop meanings as well as processes for resolving previous misunderstandings of the sacred.

Chaplains commonly work on the perimeter of institutionalised religion, that is, they may be members of their own religious tradition yet work primarily in another environment – that of the university. This enables the chaplain to establish bridges between the experiences of faith and the exploration of faith and meaning.

Although universities are becoming increasingly focused on corporate structures and on measuring outcomes as preferred processes, there is ongoing examination of underlying values, social consciousness and the place of the university within the wider society (Legood 1999). Universities generally take their role in society seriously; they understand that they have a responsibility to influence society for its overall well-being and not merely for economic success (Legood 1999). Universities commonly set out their values in documents such as mission statements, strategic plans, graduate attributes or vision statements. This environment and the articulation of these values provide chaplains with diverse opportunities to engage in the discussions, participate in debates and influence the content and direction. Chaplains have skills in spiritual formation, and offer an important perspective through their ability to question values and beliefs and add another perspective to the debates in these areas. The chaplain has the opportunity to contribute not only to the spiritual explorations of individuals, but also to the overall formation of the institution with the ultimate aim of fostering a better (more ethical) society and to challenge values which may conflict with this (Bodycomb 1999).

COMPASSION⁴

Chaplaincy has often been viewed synonymous with responding to grief, loss and mourning or conducting weddings and other ceremonies. While chaplains clearly do respond at such times, their ability to respond is far more intricate than commonly imagined. A chaplain not only provides service, but links people into services and networks. For example, in the instance of a death, the chaplain can provide personal support to individuals, support to the relevant area within the university, on-campus liturgy or ritual and access to appropriate services beyond the campus thus linking personal support with wider facilitation and linking university with community.

Chaplains are focused on understanding people and meeting their pastoral needs. While pastoral care is not unique to chaplains, chaplains bring a unique approach through their ability to integrate their support of people with their understanding of ultimate meaning (Putney 2000). Chaplains often work collaboratively with other services such as student service personnel, counsellors and others, to enable the best possible support for individuals. In this context, chaplains offer pastoral support to students and staff, regardless of their individual beliefs. The chaplain is often well networked and is thus in a position to refer people to resources both on and beyond the campus as well as linking personal, spiritual and material support.

The chaplain is able to assist to bridge some of the gaps and can provide support to both the individuals involved as well as broaden understanding. The chaplain's role here is not to 'solve the problem' but to provide for compassionate understanding within the context of the institution. Some kinds of support are fairly routine, such as linking a struggling student with appropriate support agencies in the wider community. Other situations require more delicate support. For example, given the diversity of campus populations, it is not uncommon for individuals to form personal relationships across cultural or religious divides where in other circumstances it would be highly unlikely for those individuals even to have met. Imagine, a student from a Baptist tradition who has fallen in love with a Hindu student: the two express their intention to marry but encounter strong objections from their respective families. Or, the case of a young woman from a traditional Islamic background who has recently had a pregnancy terminated and cannot think of anyone except the chaplain to confide in and asks how she can reconcile with her traditional beliefs and whether or not she should reveal her situation to her family. Each of these situations requires personal support and often extends to institutional support such as assisting a student to obtain an extension for an assignment or special consideration in some context.

⁴ The word compassion comes from two Latin words *cum* and *patio*, literally meaning 'to suffer with' another (Nouwen, McNeill & Morrison 1982). This sense of the word grounds the understanding with which it is used here and also links with the idea of being.

Beyond care for individuals, the importance and impact of public liturgy or ceremony on campus should not be underestimated. Public liturgy has a role in building a caring community and fostering a sense of belonging and identification (Howarth, 2000). This has certainly been the experience of many chaplains following events such as 9/11 or the Bali bombings where public events have drawn people together and fostered compassion.

Compassionate care also applies to the institution more generally. For instance, chaplains typically have expertise in critical incident response. They can provide useful support for institutions in this arena both as part of the response team as well as helping to formulate institutional policies and guidelines. The involvement of a chaplain as part of the response team requires significant relationships to be developed within the institution and the chaplain to be familiar with and participate in the systems which enable this kind of response.

The compassionate, pastoral role of a chaplain seeks to affirm the intrinsic value of each individual human life. In doing so, the chaplain participates at many levels from the personal to the institutional.

TRANSLATION

Anyone who has learned more than one language will at some stage have encountered the difficulties of translation. Not every word in one language has a direct (linear) equivalent in another language. Some terms need to be translated with careful explanations and some things (especially jokes and colloquialisms) are often untranslatable in any direct sense. Even where a word can be translated, the conceptual frame which underpins its meaning is often far more difficult to incorporate into a translation as this can require a deeper understanding not only of language itself but also of culture and meaning. This raises the notion of not only being able to translate language, but of translating cultural meanings or being bi-culturally literate.

In this sense, chaplaincy acts as a kind of translation service. Chaplains offer ways of making religious and spiritual thought (especially where this is sometimes expressed in arcane or unfamiliar language) accessible to the campus population. Likewise, the chaplain can assist religious leaders to understand the specific needs of the university and to be able to respond appropriately. The process of translation involves far more than simply forming connections between the sacred and the secular, the religious and the university. It involves providing intellectual input and spiritual perspectives on current debates. The chaplain needs to become multilingual or bicultural in a religious sense, not only between his or her own beliefs and the university but also among religious belief systems. Students and staff come with diverse needs and the chaplain is in a position to understand their beliefs and to 'translate' their questions and queries. The experience of the university context is a direct experience of engaging with other cultures (especially on internationalised campuses) and can often lead people to question their values and beliefs or even to 'convert' from one faith to another. The chaplain is uniquely placed to provide personal and intellectual support in this journey.

University study is about exploring, learning and developing new ideas. This inherently challenges beliefs, often deeply held beliefs. Some students find this process difficult, especially where the questioning impacts on an individual's understanding of 'meaning of life' questions (e.g. who they are and what life is all about). A chaplain's role is to understand this growth process and to assist those who wish to question, explore or 'reframe' their beliefs. A common example of this is students finding their beliefs about creation / evolution challenged. However, there are many other kinds of belief which are challenged in the classroom, but for which the classroom does not provide a framework for personal resolution. There are many ethical and value issues raised for students, which they need to resolve for themselves. Where does a student go to discuss these issues? Oftentimes the classroom is not an appropriate place to expose and test developing views. While friends, a counsellor or a local minister may be helpful, the campus chaplain is uniquely placed to explore and integrate questions raised in the university context – to translate because the chaplain is 'multilingual' in this context. Chaplains have freedom to interact across these issues and can be a useful 'sounding board' or 'listening post' for individuals to explore conflicting ideas and shifting ground.

Beyond the big questions there is a more routine, but no less mundane, aspect to translation. This often involves relatively simple questions of understanding beliefs and interpreting, e.g. the student who requests a change of exam time or who asks to be absent from an excursion on the basis that the timing conflicts with religious (prayer) commitments. Where does the lecturer or university administrator seek information to check the veracity of the student's claims? Often such requests may be about religious festivals which are not commonly adhered to in Australian society, or whose timing is not well understood (e.g. many religious festivals are based on a lunar calendar). The chaplain can be the point of contact, translating an understanding of religious commitments to the university and advising what is reasonable for the student to request and for the university to provide. The chaplain's ability to translate between the sacred and the secular and between various religious belief systems enables the university to provide a more holistic learning experience for its students. This ability to translate requires the chaplain to be familiar with the 'language' of the religious and the 'language' of the institution (e.g. its policies and processes). The chaplain can also extend this by impacting on and assisting to develop the university's policies and procedures in these areas.

CONNECTING

For many (students and staff), faith is an integral component of life, not adjunct to it; and without active connectedness to their religious community, their resilience and ability to participate fully may be limited. The needs of many religious groups (and thus the students and staff who are members of these groups) remain poorly understood by university administrations. Chaplains connect people. This requires the chaplain to have strong and effective networks. The task is not just to listen to the needs of students and

staff, but also to connect them with services and resources both on campus and in the wider community. Students, in particular, can at times feel dislocated and isolated in the context of the university. Not all needs can be catered for on campus, many times it is more effective to connect someone with resources in the wider community. Whether a person seeks a place of worship, information, professional support or even a cheap meal, connecting them to the most appropriate people and resources both on and beyond the campus is important. This requires strong collaborative relationships between chaplains, counsellors, social welfare workers, careers or employment counsellors and others.

Religious groups and communities often seek access to the university. Particularly early in the academic year numerous attempts may be made to advertise religious or spiritual opportunities to the campus population. Some of these are sanctioned through the university, the student body or the chaplaincy. Others seem to advertise the latest ‘guru’ or ‘spiritual expert’, often offering an array of beliefs and practices which sound enticing but whose credentials and credibility are largely unknown. The chaplain is an important point of connection, providing information and understanding to the university and offering advice towards a ‘gate keeping’ process which can assist the university to determine which activities to permit on campus. Universities are commonly concerned about their duty of care to students, and this can extend to the spiritual or religious activities which are promoted and / or provided on campus. Universities are generally reticent to regulate such activities and actively promote freedom of speech and belief in the context of a ‘secular’ (religiously agnostic) society, but are at the same time sensitive to the potential negative impact of highly proselytising groups. The role of the chaplain in providing advice and guidance can be crucial for the university in this arena.

The wider community also connects in more sophisticated ways with the university – e.g. through the provision of chaplains. In this context it is increasingly common to see multifaith chaplaincy teams working collaboratively. This not only adds to the richness of support available, it also creates unique opportunities for inter-faith interaction and for learning about particular faith traditions, opportunities unlikely to be replicated elsewhere. It can also facilitate the management and administration of campus prayer / worship facilities, an issue which could easily occupy a paper in its own right.

Chaplaincy assists with connecting people, and a chaplain’s presence on campus affirms and normalises this as part of the spiritual dimension of life.

MEDIATOR / PROTECTOR

The ability of a chaplain to work within and between faith traditions – that is to operate at inter-faith, intra-faith levels – is essential to the role. While there continue to be denominationally based chaplains who view their role primarily as representing their own tradition, most are at least able to cross denominational boundaries (in the sense of translating) when required. University life is not immune from the kinds of conflicts which arise in wider society, including those based on religious (mis)understandings. Indeed, it is not uncommon for some of these conflicts to be replicated in the university. Helping to facilitate a process which enables affected parties to bring their views to an

appropriate conclusion while respecting the integrity of their beliefs and ensuring appropriate behaviour standards is important in the context of campus life. A chaplain may be invited to act as a mediator/ protector / reconciler and peacemaker, either formally or informally. Conflict within and between religious groups is not uncommon and often needs a mechanism to resolve the immediate conflict even if the wider issues which precipitate it are beyond immediate resolution.

At other times a chaplain may be called to protect an individual in the context of a formal process. For instance, the chaplain may accompany a student or staff member - in a supportive capacity - to a formal hearing, or to a meeting which seeks to resolve complex concerns. This is not to say that a chaplain is somehow a mediator on all issues, rather where there are conflicts of a religious or spiritual nature, the skilful and respectful involvement of chaplains can provide important support and assistance towards finding a solution.

Chaplains can also respond 'pre-emptively' (as it were) through being part of the overall educative process, utilising their skill in inter-faith discussion and liaising with the leaders of faith groups. The chaplain is in a key position to create opportunities for effective dialogue on religious issues (Hudson 2001). Within this context the chaplain is also able to ensure that minority groups are protected and are given equal rights to flourish (von Dietze and Chang 2001)⁵ e.g. through provision of an 'umbrella' under which these groups are offered space to meet and are given access to support.

INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

University education is the period of life when students exercise freedom, test ideas and beliefs, and form world views and value perspectives. Key ethical and moral views are formed during this process. In the development of their cognitive and discursive skills, students and staff sometimes seek to connect or reconnect with the spiritual (Galitos 2002). Chaplains are experienced in the process of formation. In the university milieu it is important to support students and staff to locate ways of integrating faith and life both in practice and intellectually (Valk 2001). A chaplain in this environment becomes something like a 'wandering professor' of religious thought (not in the sense of holding a chair, but in the sense of one who 'professes' a discipline).

... the crucial role of the chaplain in the university, I believe, is intellectual, to alert students and staff to the questions of value, the critique of what is manifestly false and destructive in current understanding and practice, and to engage with them in the work of forming a world-view which is less destructive to people and the world we inhabit and more in tune with what is actually the case (Brady 1999:51)

Chaplains can offer a clear and articulate voice elaborating on faith and spiritual issues as

⁵ This aspect of the role could be seen to clash with the 'gate keeping' function referred to above. The distinction to be made is that 'gate keeping' is important mainly where external groups are seeking access to the campus population. Whereas, a protective role comes into play where students seek to form groups on campus or find safe ways to express their religious or spiritual commitments within the context of university life.

well as social, cultural, philosophical and other domains. This is part of the credibility of chaplaincy in an intellectual environment. Fitzgerald (1999) takes the point further, suggesting that, due to their work across the university, chaplains *should* find themselves in a position to offer visions for transcending specific fields of study and enabling the potential for wider knowledge and wisdom to be reached. Effective teaching and research do not occur in a vacuum, but are supported and enhanced alongside a range of resources and facilities – as one of these, the chaplaincy is able to provide facilitation in this context by contributing to questioning, scholarship, wise decision making and public dialogue and debate (Robinson 2002). Others have called this aspect of the role 'intelligent God talk', namely making an articulate intellectual contribution and giving voice to spiritual and religious issues in the university context.

Through being part of the university, the chaplain is able to contribute to its intellectual life. This can occur as part of discussion forums, research collaborations, publications, teaching and the like. The focus, though, is that the chaplain's work is always alongside others.

CONCLUSION

Many people in the university will already have their needs catered for elsewhere. Some will seek to explore the impact of university life on their values and beliefs, others will find that the questioning atmosphere of university life leads them to spiritual reflection and still others will seek out the practical skills or assistance of a chaplain. The skill set of chaplains is very broad, ranging from supporting people in times of crisis to connection and translation and helping to make intelligent sense of life's big questions. Sometimes a chaplain is simply the most appropriate person to address someone's specific needs.

Through listening, empathising, and offering reasoned responses the chaplain can enable individuals and institutions to strive towards their aspirations and to (re)connect with some of the deeper values of life. A key for chaplains is ensuring that they are well known and diversely connected within their university and community, that their presence and role is well understood and advertised, and that they have time for others. An important feature of being a chaplain in this environment is participation in intellectual pursuits, in whatever way this might be achieved, it is the university environment after all.

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